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Reviews by Ingeborg Roskelly and George Woodcock.

Reproduction of Painting by Georges Rouault.

Two Shillings

NOW

VOLUME FIVE

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George Woodcock

Days of Transition

The war is over, and, although it is already a tautology to say that in modern society the cessation of hostilities does not amount to real peace, we are nevertheless presented with a new situation to which we must adapt our strained nerves and minds. For six years we have lived in a war society where, whether we opposed or supported the war or merely went with the herd because we had no opinions at all, we were at least fairly certain of the dangers and duties and advantages of our particular situations. After the depression years, there were men who even welcomed being in the army or in prison, because it gave an external discipline to a life that had been completely aimless; there were writers and artists who were glad to reach the security of war jobs with the B.B.C. or the ministries, because it saved them from both physical want and the artistic problems which they feared to resolve.

The war had a distressing effect on the nervous condition and the ethical morale of the people in general. We have all become more callous and we are all burdened with anxieties and neuroses as heavily as with physical ailments. The war years were often almost unbearably tedious, and sometimes by contrast more exciting than we desired. Years in the army, in gaol, on the run, have inevitably twisted our outlook, made us more fearful and more resentful than we would have been in peacetime. We have, indeed, developed into a race of C.3 bodies and paranoiac minds.

Nevertheless, the war had its advantages for those who feared responsibility; it fed them, clothed them, gave some of them fat salaries and others private's pay; it gave them a uniform ideology and a uniform objective. They were plunged into a life in which they could live without thinking a single thought, and for the mentally lazy this did not seem a tragedy. They just appropriated the softest jobs they could find, and stagnated until the war was over.

Now, however, the war *is* over, and the millions who were put into uniforms, given numbers and systematically robbed of their individual characteristics, will be turned out of the armies and factories that swallowed their peacetime individualities, to seek jobs and homes in a strange world. Their capacities for initiative have been sapped, their gifts have been warped and their mental fervour dimmed by the regimentation of war lives, but, now that the collective requires their bodies no longer, they will be thrust back into the world as individuals robbed of their individual virtues, they will be forced to take the responsibility for their own fates, whether they like it or not. Unemployment, overcrowding and all the evils of pre-war life, in accentuated form, will be their future. Few of them expect anything

better. And over their illusory freedom and their flimsy peace will lower the clouds of power politics and impending wars.

We are going into a future where we must change if we are to survive. Society is breaking down into physical and spiritual chaos, in which something more than the hard virtues of wartime will be necessary to individual men and women if they are not to be submerged, to die off like the saurians because their structures are not adapted to a different age.

Already the peace has shown itself in some aspects worse than the war. And as the millions emerge from the khaki army and join the grey army of the dole queues, it is likely to become even more miserable. The physical ills of lack of food and lack of housing space are obvious, but there will also be the mental evils of a life without positive aim, which will become dominated by the mass suggestion of newspapers and the radio. For, although the regimented masses will lose their uniforms, the power of the state will be no less carefully maintained. Peacetime society in some ways will be very much like wartime society, with men and women regimented through the employment exchange instead of the army, pensioned off with social security schemes which will keep them in order at the lowest possible cost to the ruling class. Nominally they will be individuals again, but, as their wills have been weakened by so many years of regimentation, it is hoped that they will not show any independent mental characteristics, but will be swept as unprotesting atoms in the stream that will flow through the depressions and dead waters of peace to the cataracts of the next war.

This is the fate that waits for those who emerge from this war, unless they can rediscover their sense of responsibility. It was easy during the war to be irresponsible and to survive. After the war to be irresponsible will mean, individually, a complete spiritual submergence in the inert and aimless mass and, collectively, the inevitable social tragedies of depression and war. The only way to gain and preserve a life worth its name, will be for men to become responsible and integrated individuals.

This statement raises the question, what is responsibility? How are we to become responsible? Responsibility is a state of mind, in which we examine our intentions and motives in such a way that our actions arise, not from the dictates of an external authority, but from the promptings of our own internal perceptions of right. Men are capable of creating a peaceful and happy world only in so far as they are capable of subjecting their own actions and the events of the external world to values which they apprehend internally and independently. Otherwise, they will be led away by mass illusions, they will accept what they are told without examination, and will be guided into disaster without realising the direction of their progress. In other words, they will be irresponsible and unconscious. Responsibility is the active aspect of consciousness.

The irresponsible acceptance of dogmas, the unconscious following of mass tendencies, have subjected men throughout the centuries to one form of slavery after another. Having become aware of their slaveries, men have thrown them off, but never yet have they been sufficiently responsible not to escape one slavery and fall into another. The history of revolutions to this day is merely a history of changes in the ruling class. It is not a history of the development of freedom. Irresponsibility has made men

slaves, it has made them live for the riches they would never enjoy and die for the causes they could never understand. It had caused twenty five million men to die in the last six years in order to perpetuate the slavery of those who survive.

It is strange that men should have been content to adopt for so long the fallacy that freedom will come from obedience and the lie that government is made necessary by the nature of man. The truth is that freedom can only arise from responsibility, from individual independence, and that independence is incompatible with obedience, which is the acceptance of an external standard and is therefore irresponsibility. Government, which springs from obedience and irresponsibility, is contrary to the individual nature of man, and becomes possible only because men are afraid to accept their freedom. When men become responsible, governments must collapse, and freedom will remain in their ruin.

But let us not imagine that it is easy to be responsible. Living in isolation from the political and social struggle, it is not difficult to achieve the detachment that makes our judgment function independently in its examination of the world and its motivation of our actions. But responsibility is a social as well as an individual attribute. We can only regard ourselves as fully responsible if we can go into society and, while speaking what is in our minds and acting for freedom, avoid the siren voices that tempt us to adapt our judgments to external values, our thoughts to the dogmas of mass ideologies and our actions to the tendencies implicit in mass movements.

How difficult the preservation of individual responsibility can become in certain unfavourable circumstances is shown in the sad history of Ignazio Silone. To many of us Silone was one of the great hopes of social enlightenment, an independent critic of political manifestations, a responsible thinker, and an incorruptible individual. In his Swiss exile he achieved an independence of judgment and a detachment of outlook that made him the most profound European social writer of his time. *The School for Dictators* was a great indictment of the social irresponsibility that underlies all mass political action; his last novel, *The Seed Beneath the Snow*, was a beautiful exposition of the need for an organic growth of society based on individual responsibility and the union of responsible individuals. No more searching critic of politicians and parties existed in his day, no man seemed more immune from the mass ideologies of Fascism and Marxism, no man seemed less likely to be led into the morass of political tactics and expediency. To many of us Silone appeared the strongest and most responsible writer of our day. For years we regarded him as the one sea-green incorruptible, and when he returned to Italy we imagined that he would stand apart from the sordidities of the political struggle and strive by his example and teaching to lead men to become responsible individuals and not party puppets. In fact, although he never gave himself the name, we regarded Silone as the great anarchist (anarchy is merely the generic term for responsibility) and expected him to stand forward in Italy as another Malatesta. We were disappointed.

Instead of maintaining that detachment from political tactics which alone could have made him a great social influence, Silone returned to the parties

he had condemned so effectively many years before, joined the Socialists, and began to advocate an alliance with the Communists, in spite of the fact that he himself had described their creed as "Red fascism" and had often condemned their system of government as a ruthless dictatorship.

The American review *Politics* quotes an article in *Avanti* in which Silone makes the following astounding statement:

> "The varying historical forms which the working class movement has taken in different countries by no means alters the basic truth that it is merely a question of differentiated forms of the same general problem. This truth gives meaning to, and guarantees the continuation of that unity of action which has joined Socialists with Communists . . . In countries like England, Sweden and Switzerland, unity of action means an agreement with Soviet Russia . . . For countries like Italy, unity of action is a matter of *both* domestic and foreign policy. One of the most urgent present-day problems is to give organic and permanent form to the collaboration of western democratic socialism with Soviet Russia.

As the editor of *Politics* points out, it is shocking that the author of *The Seed Beneath the Snow* should advocate "organic and permanent" collaboration with the Stalinist regime, "with its police terror, its forced labour camps, its huge and increasing class differences, its denial of the most elementary civic and individual liberties, its monolithic political structure, its crude nationalism." It is obvious that Silone had changed his values, and that, in action if not in theory, he has stepped back from his championing of individual responsibility into an acceptance of political irresponsibility.

The sad and strange case of Silone can be taken as an object lesson showing that the maintenance of individual responsibility is only too difficult in a world where all the temptations are to seek refuge in the illusory comforts of mass movements and mass ideologies. We cannot condemn Silone. We can only regret his action and say, however smugly it may sound, "There, but for the grace of God . . ."

Nor should we give any less credit to Silone's works because of his actions. The truths revealed by the insight of an artist will not always be evident in his deeds, and the accurate revelation contained in *The Seed Beneath the Snow* is no less valid because Silone himself has chosen to act against it.

I have made this wide digression into the examination of Silone's recent actions, because they form a notable case of the failure of responsibility. Silone is like an alcoholic who, in spite of his rational awareness of the folly of his act, returns again and again to the tippling which he had eschewed as bad for his health. Fully aware that only the straight and narrow way of responsibility will lead to eventual human salvation, he has found himself led down the primrose path of irresponsibility towards the destruction of all he has created in his work. Was ever the schizoid tendency of the modern mind shown in a more startling example?

Anarchism, the social doctrine based on individual responsibility, has been regarded by many of its adherents as an easy way out of the difficulties of the modern world. It is, indeed, a sure way, because it negates completely the lack of personal responsibility which is the main cause of social chaos. But it is, for this very reason, a hard way. It offers us responsibility and freedom, and we are afraid of both. Yet it is only by striving on this way towards anarchism, that we can achieve our own integrity and thus contribute towards the triumph of social responsibility. It is a struggle

that goes forward in our minds and in our actions. It is spiritual and cultural as well as political, for anarchism and responsibility are conceptions that apply not merely to social patterns, but also to the whole of life.

If we can learn to build up our own personal integrity, and to avoid the temptation of irresponsibility, we can assuredly save ourselves from the grey army of the lost. If we fail, our destruction in the great iron Niagara of the next war is almost inevitable. We must become independent and responsible beings, or two-legged cattle branded for the slaughter. There is no other possibility. Our choice is literally between freedom and death.

Julian Symons

The End of a War

8 Notes on the Objective of Writing in our Time

1

THE END OF A WAR

Bonfires in the streets, Hitler hanged thousands of times in effigy, Churchill beaming from the Ministry of Health balcony: even official commentators observed the mechanical nature of the rejoicing on May 8. Flags appeared in and outside houses, the Soviet Flag outside some: but in London the shells of gutted houses stood like a reminder of death, with weeds growing on the tops of second-storey walls. Put against the scenes of strictly-ordered joy, the crowds listened indifferently to Churchill's broadcast voice rumbling "Advance Britannia": put against this another picture, the wrecked Elephant & Castle where I stood listening to that voice, shortage not merely of rationed but of unrationed foods, enormous slagheaps of bricks forty feet high piled where ruins have been cleared, tens of thousands of people living in insanitary, over-crowded conditions. Perhaps they speak ironically, this country's leaders, when they say that May 8 marked the end of a war?

We all feel relief, obviously, at the end of bombing and blackout: but a relief rooted in hysteria, so that an undiminished tension remains round the heart, and there can be few people in London who do not feel disappointed by the peace. There is (again I speak of London) general acceptance of the idea of the "next" war: the war against the Soviet Union.

★ ★ ★ ★

One has to put down, I believe, these conditions of life, before one can talk, as the editor of *NOW* has asked me to do, about the writing which has been produced in England since September 1939. What kind of writing should we have expected, and desired, from the conditions of life that have obtained in England during the past five and a half years? From the phoney war of 1939 and early 1940, the sharply radical, near-revolutionary

mood of the blitz, through the long years which have mixed achievement, disillusionment and boredom in equal measure? And what kind of writing did we get? I suggest most strongly that this background is not irrelevant: that if we impose the writing on the background, as a picture is imposed upon a screen, its characteristics will be more sharply defined than if we consider it as "writing", simply, an individual trapeze act performed by a virtuoso. "It must be restated," Mr. Cyril Connolly wrote in the second number of *HORIZON,* published in February 1940, "that writing is an art, that good writing, like all art, is capable of producing a deep and satisfying emotion in the reader whether it is about Mozart, the fate of Austria, or the habits of bees." It is the virtuoso trapeze artist, clearly, who finds favour with Mr. Connolly; and the ideas of the virtuoso trapeze artist have had little opposition throughout the war.

II

WRITING IN THE WAR

This is a point of some importance. Consider for a moment that background—the background of Nazi-occupied Europe, of human struggle and optimism and, too often, defeat and death: against such a background can a nice aestheticism produce any results which are not frivolous or second-rate? Observe that it is not the "truth" of the idea that writing is "an end in itself" that is in question, but the merit of the work that can be inspired by such an idea in a time of social disorder and destruction. The war years have been marked in literature by a curious neo-Georgian respectability, mixed with an equally curious irresponsible individual adventurism. Here are some of their highlights, viewed historically:

MAGAZINES. The writing of the last fifty years in England is nicely characterised by its typical magazines. *The Savoy* and *The Yellow Book* in the 'Nineties, *The English Review* before the first World War and *Blast* during it, *The Criterion* and *The Calendar* in the twenties, *Left Review* and *New Verse* in the thirties, *Horizon* in the forties—these give perfectly the flavour of their period. *Horizon* was born in January 1940. It printed all sorts of work, by writers with all sorts of beliefs: but it avoided conspicuously the two most interesting literary movements of our time—the movement towards methodological criticism represented by Yvor Winters, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate and some other American writers, and the movement towards the *literary* left, of those who experimented in the twenties and early thirties in the dangerous medium of *words.* The most notable thing about this bland and cultured magazine, indeed, was the maintenance of its editing at a standard of gentlemanliness hardly approached by any editor of a serious literary paper in the last twenty years. *Horizon* was a neo-Georgian literary paper, with modernist overtones: its sire may have been *The Criterion,* but its dam was certainly *The London Mercury.*

Penguin New Writing was not the most characteristic, but perhaps it was the most valuable magazine of the war years. Published at 9d. in an edition of 60,000 to 100,000 copies, it made a more serious effort than *Horizon* to make a survey of culture in wartime, to keep up to date, and at the same time to print critical and imaginative work of quality. Here, one

can say, is a basis from which something important might have grown. Yet in fact, when one looks through *Penguin New Writing,* there is little that one wants to re-read. Perhaps too much was sacrificed for the sake of that large audience—perhaps, worse still, no conscious sacrifice was involved. Certainly the chunks of reportage read too much like bits from a journalist's reminiscences, the imaginative writing was on too low a level, the poems again were mostly neo-Georgian. Decidedly *Penguin New Writing* was a relic or an extension, of the Popular Front.

Something of the excitement which should have been present in *Penguin New Writing* could be found in the erratically-published numbers of *Now,* a magazine which in spite of a certain amateurishness in presentation, was at least not afraid to publish opinions heretical even to its own anarchist policy. The war years saw also a great growth of little magazines, which mingled happily the immature with the banal in writing. Their most remarkable feature was the ignorance displayed in their editing (in comparison with the very intelligent and acute editing of *New Verse, New Writing* and *Left Review* in the thirties). The movement away from experiment and towards a bastard neo-Georgianism in verse and a tame romanticism in prose characterised these papers also, on a much lower level of performance than *Horizon.*

NOVELS. Mr. Eliot said some twenty years ago that the *novel,* as an art-form, had no more validity. With *Ulysses* the novel in English came to a full-stop: it is difficult, indeed, to see what further progress the novel could make. Examination of a good many novels written during the war confirms the correctness of this viewpoint. Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh; these two writers only (among English writers working in or near England) published during the war books that could be considered to approach works of art. The names of Rex Warner, Rosamond Lehmann, Philip Toynbee, and perhaps two or three others, are considered only to be, by any high standard, dismissed. And even to compare *Put Out More Flags* or *The Power and the Glory* with a mature book by Hardy or by Henry James is to realise that Waugh's and Green's books were not second- but fifth-rate. That is, they were readable, intelligent, well-constructed books: but not anything like great novels. The day of the "great" novel, based on the moral conflict of the individual, let us accept it, is done.

POETRY. No poetry written in this war, by serving men or civilians approached in satiric vigour the poems of Sassoon or in passionate feeling the work of Wilfred Owen in the last war. That is a matter of general agreement. The development of young poets in this war was towards deliberate rhetorical obscurantism on one hand—an obscurantism resulting in "difficulty" for the reader which was far from the genuine intellectual difficulty of Eliot or Auden. If this obscurantism was deliberate, however, it was accompanied by an equally deliberate and unhappy simplicity: obscurantism and false simplicity walked hand in hand in the work of Mr. Henry Treece. Of the older poets—those still the right side of forty—Mr. Spender produced a fine and memorable book, *Ruins and Visions;* of the younger writers Alun Lewis and Roy Fuller wrote some good poems: but for these sincere and unhappy artists the war appeared chiefly as a kind of backcloth against which a personal drama was played. The limitations in such an

attitude were obvious. In general the level of poetry declined sharply from 1939 onwards: the decline could be seen clearly in the sentimental nonsense printed in many little magazines, and in the titles published in Faber's list.

FINALLY. What we witnessed during the war was the collapse of the "highbrow" movement of the twenties and thirties. Why?

III

THE ADVANCE OF KITSCH

Kitsch is the name we generally give to the debasement of something good by a "popular" and shoddy imitation of it. I suggest that a rapid advance of kitsch in writing is occurring in England to-day.

An *element* of kitsch is present in most of the highbrow writing of our time: in the Auden and Isherwood plays, for instance, with their deliberate buffoonery and playing-down to the audience, we have kitsch of a curious and unprofitable kind. More characteristic is the voice of kitsch when it says: "Why not make your work a little easier, a little more cheerful? Why not add some sex appeal to that difficult novel, a human touch to that rather arid essay, a Swinburne lilt to that poem? What's wrong, anyway, with Swinburne or Lytton Strachey or Arnold Bennett? What's wrong with appealing to a wide audience?" What *is* wrong? Simply that the gap between good writing and popular writing is increasing every year, that the voice luring onward the unwary is to-day always the voice of the *New Yorker*, of Hollywood or the Great White Way. I have used American traps because it is difficult to think of English ones: I suggest that this is because the gap between good writing and kitsch still yawns in America, whereas in England that gap is now almost closed. The reason for this rapid advance of kitsch in England is the speed with which the English writer's economic situation has deteriorated under capitalism in the last few years, transforming him in many cases from a *rentier* to a man compelled to earn a living. But is the advance of kitsch a fact? Consider: MacNeice writing feature programmes for the B.B.C.; Day Lewis producing propaganda, defending the bad against the worse, behind a desk at the Ministry of Information; Spender writing a book on "Citizens in Peace and War";* is it not clear that these activities are a debasement of the artist's function? And is it surprising, when this example is set them by their elders and artistic betters, that most of our younger writers of promise should produce kitsch not (as MacNeice, Spender and Day Lewis do) as something separate from the writing they regard seriously, but as that writing itself?

It would be possible to elaborate in detail the "highbrow" positions that have been abandoned in the last few years (consider, for instance, the merging of pure thriller with classy psychological atmospherics in Graham Greene, the steady decline even from its own ivory-tower standards of *Horizon*, the tendency to illustration and luxury-production of books of verse—if you don't like the poems you can look at the pretty pictures), but really the advance of kitsch, once pointed out, is self-evident. *Horizon* is

*No personal reflection is intended upon these writers: it would be irrelevant to "blame" them for an inevitable development.

not yet, of course, a commercial magazine—it has a standard to which its editor no doubt tries honestly to adhere; Graham Greene is by no means simply a commercial writer. Nevertheless it is certain that, at the present rate of progress, there will in a few years be no gap at all in England between kitsch and serious writing: and this means in effect that good writing will have disappeared.

Is there any way of checking the advance of kitsch?

IV

THE STRANGE CASE OF SHILLING

The central figure of *The Inquest,* an interesting and in many ways brilliant novel by the Austrian writer Robert Neumann, is a famous English writer named Shilling. There is something odd about Shilling. He is now the ghost of a famous writer, made famous by an outspoken novel called *The Disinherited,* and he has not published a novel for years. He is working at a book on Odysseus of which 416 pages are written ("He was fleeing passionately, he said, from this present time into a past that he could cut and chisel to his fancy"), but to which he has not added a page in three years. What is the matter with Shilling? What stops him from writing?

Several part-answers to this question are given in *The Inquest*: but the basic reason is a schizophrenic indecision, which leaves Shilling unable to resolve on any clear course of action. He is a sensualist, yet when we meet him he is not living with a woman; he is Left, but belongs to no Left party. ("So you are a pacifist?" enquired the civil servant. Shilling replied: "No; I am for Peace." The official . . . solicited: "But you are against Nazis and Fascists, Mr. Shilling, and for Democracy?" His visitor replied: "I am for Man.") The secret of Shilling's life, his password in his disputes with himself, is the word "Ulm".

Ulm signifies for Shilling an occasion years ago when he was really a famous and affluent writer. He sees on a train an exceptionally beautiful young woman who is getting off the train at Ulm. He decides to get off with her. But to get off the train means that he will miss meeting a young poet, miss sleeping a night with an actress, break an appointment with his wife. He stands in the open compartment door at Ulm—but he does not get out. "You went on writing. And went on living. And your hair thinned. And you grew heavy. And death sat in the pouches beneath your eyes. And you had not changed trains. And that was Ulm." Years later we find Shilling, weighed down by the burden of Ulm—of all the Ulms that have made up his life—investigating with passionate and horrified interest the suicide of a young woman who has spent her life in militant Left-wing activity. Shilling bears always within him the torturing consciousness of all the things he too might have done. But suppose that Shilling had got out at Ulm? Would it really have made any difference?

Shilling is presented to us as a type of highly individualistic writer who nevertheless has progressive ideas. He avoids the pitfall of writing kitsch; he avoids being drawn into the whirlpool of Left politics; he asserts the value of his own ego, his own gifts. But it is one of the paradoxes of our time that this position is no longer tenable; that the egoist of genius

is unable to-day to look into his own heart and find there a vision of the world. The only thoroughly satisfying attitude for a writer to-day, the only way in which his life can become an integrated whole with the life around him, is by participation in political activity: yet such participation is likely to eliminate altogether his capacity to produce art.

This, then, is the answer to that question about kitsch: purely in theory the writer should be able to experience an infinite succession of exciting and interesting events which should broaden his view of life and the world, and make possible the creation of masterpieces. In fact the cultivation of "experience" is likely to end to-day in a "freedom" which is valueless because it appears to the writer obviously an anacronism. Ulm, that dazzling prospect, is merely a mirage, as Lawrence and Huxley have shown us by force of personal example: the writer's choice lies between an ivory-tower aestheticism which becomes more and more corrupted by kitsch because of the failure of his economic position, a frank compliance with the necessity to produce kitsch, and absorption in politics and gradual abandonment of creative writing. Such are the discomforting alternatives.

V

"THE OBJECTIVE OF ART IS . . ."

"The objective of art to-day", a friend said decisively, "Is to divert attention from the class struggle." This is a crude and coarse viewpoint: it ignores the therapeutic value of art for the individual, and the way in which a work of art enters back into mass consciousness: but, if we consider art from a non-magical point of view, if we consider Blake's Prophetic Books even as *social* items and not as god-given visions, can we deny that this view is in essence true? Almost all the Left-wing writing that does *not* have the objective of diverting attention from the class struggle is so vulgar in thought and sentiment, so clumsy in execution, that it is a workman's botched job done quite simply in the service of the class struggle, not to be considered as "art" at all. Let us make then the admission: the objective of art to-day (an unconscious objective of course for almost all artists) is to divert attention from the class struggle. Where does it lead us?

VI

THE END OF MORALITY

Let me put this point about the class struggle in another way. What I am saying is that in England the values of art are to-day and have been for hundreds of years the values of one or another elite of individuals: the problems of literature have been about the relation of the individual to his environment—that is, they have been moral problems. To-day we have reached a point where the progress of civilization, with its accessories the bombing plane and the long-range rocket, makes all individual moral problems meaningless.

I will elaborate briefly this position. To Shakespeare, and other Elizabethan dramatists, man seemed to be in control of his fate: Othello, Macbeth and Hamlet are tragic figures, not because they sin against a moral code, but because they *could have avoided sinning*. The die once cast, the sin committed, the retribution is inevitable and just: just, because these

men chose of their free will vice instead of virtue. This belief in free will was sapped slowly with the decline of feudalism (Farquhar's characters are more at the mercy of circumstances than Congreve's, because Farquhar was personally more aware of economic problems), until for the great English novelists of the nineteenth century it died altogether, to be replaced by a theory of moral determinism. For Dickens and Thackeray, the Brontës, George Eliot and Trollope almost equally, man no longer simply acted: he was *acted upon,* and his struggle was that of an errant soul, fighting against external circumstances of a psychological or economic nature. These circumstances may become suddenly favourable as a reward to virtue, or unfavourable as a punishment to vice: but almost always in the Victorian novelists it is circumstances that decide whether a novel is to have a tragic or a happy ending. The Elizabethan hero, like Napoleon, was able to boast: "Circumstances—I *make* circumstances." Hardy and Henry James represent the fag-end of this moral determinism: in their most famous novels absolutely every event is ordered by determinism, and the moral conflict takes place in a void.

To-day even this moral determinism is denied the writer: there are no moral problems in Hemingway, Faulkner or Dos Passos—their characters live at too low a plane of perception, and the force of events is too great, for a moral problem to exist. Some novelists, with less faithfulness to life, import a problem which does not have relevance within their terms of reference: the basic 'problem" of Graham Greene's novels always seems phoney because we are not convinced that the characters portrayed have the subtlety Greene gives them—Pinkie in *Brighton Rock* and the priest in *The Power and the Glory* are manifestly synthetic creations.

In brief: to-day there is no accepted tradition; there is only a disintegration of the forms of writing. This disintegration is expressed, voluntarily or involuntarily, in the novels and poems written to-day. The great virtue of *The Waste Land* is that in it this disintegration was comprehended and clarified: but we are rapidly approaching a point when, for a few years at least, no such clarification will be possible. Those who ignore this disintegration are guilty of insensitiveness to the salient features of life to-day.

VII

MEN WITHOUT ART

Wyndham Lewis, in his book *Men Without Art,* writing from an attitude very different from mine, puts the question "Whether in the immediate future, society shall be composed, for the first time in civilized history, of *Men Without Art.*" Mr. Lewis wrote these words in 1932: since then the possibility which he viewed with so much horror, has, in England at least, quietly become an accomplished fact. The production of novels, poems and essays of course goes on, as an industry like any other: but in the sense that art has in the past been concerned with the moral conflict of the individual with his environment, we are to-day men without art. Writing which concerns itself with the struggle of the individual in a hostile world may nowadays be very skilful, very pleasant, very readable, but it becomes basically more and more an anachronism. "The individual," Trotsky said, "Is an abstraction." The death of that abstraction is perhaps not to be

deplored: but it is disturbing that the collective art of our time—that collective art which should find a perfect medium in the cinema—is the saccharine of Hollywood, the honest amateurishness of British, or the increasing nationalism of Soviet films.

This is the situation we must face: to-day and to-morrow we shall be men without art.

VIII

RECAPITULATION: A POINT OF VIEW FROM WHICH TO APPROACH ART TO-DAY

Let me bring together the threads that run through these deliberately scattered notes, to show that they have been proceeding not quite tangentially. This is the "case" I have been making:

(i) When we look at the writing done in the war against its social background we can see its shallowness and poverty.

(ii) This shallowness and poverty do not, precisely, occur because writers to-day are less talented than they have been in the past. The arts, like European society, are disintegrating. A symptom of this disintegration is the rapid advance of kitsch, and its penetration into the previously sacrosanct area of highbrow art.

(iii) There is no escape from the writer's dilemma as an individual. It is not possible any longer to raise successfully the banner of "experience".

(iv) As art becomes more and more identifiable with kitsch it becomes more nearly true that its objective is to divert attention from the class struggle. The conflicts that prompted the great European literature of the last few hundred years have gone, and nothing has replaced them. It can practically be said that we are to-day *men without art.*

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It becomes important then to consider our attitude towards this situation, and towards writing in our time. There seems to me no chance at all of the revival in any important sense of "the novel", of "poetry" or of "the drama" in anything like their past forms. Nor is new life to be pumped into these dead forms by injection of proletarian blood simply: all the advantages of technique remain, and will remain for years, with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois writers. Yet it is not a doctrine of despair, but simply a realism, to say that the intelligentsia who try to nurture the coy bloom of art as we know it are tending a dying flower. Nor is one criticising unfavourably the intelligentsia: when there are no new shoots to cultivate one does what one can. Twenty years ago artists in Europe had good grounds for expecting the emergence of new art-forms, new methods of expression: those new forms have not emerged.

The survival value of art is as great as that of the civilization it portrays. The tradition of humanism, and the belief that man could conquer his environment, which produced the finest art of Western Europe, are manifestly dying: yet one can say with confidence that if Western civilization survives this period of violent disorder new art-forms *will* emerge. The shapes they will take are not easily defined, but it is obvious that in spite

of the slick banality of most films, in spite of the vulgar crudeness of most broadcast features, the film and the radio are two areas for collective art which are as yet almost unexplored. The death of an art-form is not the death of art: we need not put on mourning because we are men without art to-day.

It is the business of the artist, who is also a citizen of the world, to be aware of movements towards the collective art which will assuredly be the art of to-morrow: it should be his concern to encourage them and to try to raise them from the level of kitsch. But that does not mean that, at this moment of history, he can abandon the art which I have called a dying flower. There are many signs that the period of gestation before the birth of collective art will be long and painful: in the meantime only the artist can decide how he can best produce work which will satisfy him as an individual and at the same time have relevance to life to-day. As much as ever before the artist needs to retain his integrity, his sensitiveness, his perception: but they must be applied to the events that are going on in the world around him, and not merely to the endless depths of his own personality.

Herbert Read

Greeks and Barbarians

(*The contribution which follows was delivered as a lecture in Edinburgh in* 1932. *Subsequent events of a political nature laid its theme open to misinterpretation, so I put the MS at the bottom of a deep drawer. Thirteen years later I have disinterred it, believing that the time has now come for each of us to endeavour to rebuild the shattered unity of Western European civilization. As a first step we must recover the sense of the uniqueness of that civilization, for it seems certain that both in social organization and in cultural pattern we shall now be offered models which are neither indigenous nor productive of native genius.*)

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Only where there are graves are there resurrections. Nietzsche.

I hope no one has come to this lecture expecting a scholarly disquisition on the historical relations between the Greek states and the remoter nations of the classical period. I have neither the learning nor the presumption to deal with any such subject. My title is, in fact, symbolical: it is meant to represent that clash of ideals represented on the one side by the Graeco-Roman or so-called classical tradition, and on the other side by ideals which have never been given a precise formulation, but which exist in the indigenous culture of those races called barbarians even in ancient times, races to which we ourselves in great part belong by descent. For many centuries we have tried to forget the fact; we have established a system of education which

takes the literature of Greece and Rome as its prototype and ideal; we have taken the plastic arts of Greece and of the Classical Revival not merely as the *best*, but as the *only* mode of aesthetic expression; even our religion is largely coloured by the notions of Greek philosophy. Most of us have forgotten the very existence of another and an opposite approach to life. Nevertheless, it exists and has persisted through the centuries; and I do not think it necessarily an inferior ideal. In so far as it is an ideal dependent on racial characteristics, it is our own ideal, to which we have repeatedly been false. Is it possible that our comparative poverty in the plastic or visual arts is due precisely to a mistaken policy, to a betrayal of our racial consciousness, to the worship of false Olympian deities? I know that many wise and eloquent eulogies of the classical ideal exist, even among the barbarians themselves—Winckelmann, Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Hölderlin and Hofmannsthal in Germany; Dryden, Pope, Shelley, Landor and Pater in England; but Goethe himself is a divided man (what could be *less* classical than "Faust") and in England there is the awkward *fact* of Shakespeare—the greatest genius the barbarians have produced, and one who not only himself despised the classical ideals, but who obstinately refuses to fit into the categories of classical criticism. That difficulty gave rise to the school of romantic criticism, but the shifting of the problem into terms of romanticism and classicism has obscured the whole issue for more than a century. For when the question is approached with some regard for precision of terms, it is seen that the opposition "classic-romantic" is one of individual psychology, and that in this sense there is more than a little romanticism in Greek art and literature. Also, as I hope to show, there is more than a little true classicism in the barbarian arts. So if we are to get to the heart of this problem we must see it in super-individual terms—we must, in fact, give it a collective or racial setting, and that is my justification for using the words "Greeks and Barbarians." An alternative title would have been "North and South," but that would give the problem a too materialistic setting. For there are more elements in a race than those determined by its geographical environment. The Barbarians, for example, have continually shifted their habitat; but they have remained barbarians.

By way of presenting the problem as it concerns the plastic arts, I would like to quote to you a passage which I have translated from a book by one of the most distinguished art historians of our time—Dr. Josef Strzygowski.*

> "The dominant idea of history is that the Northern people of Europe were barbarians' who were first shown the way to culture through Rome and Christianity. This opinion has taken shape because these Northern people possessed no literature that has come down to us. Research in the province of the plastic arts is in the position to show that the term 'barbarian,' which even by the Romans was not used with its present customary obviousness, is from a scientific point of view quite wrong. For that purpose it is not necessary to hale back to Tacitus, who knew quite well how to distinguish between culture and civilisation, but it suffices merely to point out that the common term Barbarian has least worth as an expression of values in the mouth of the followers of the Northern people in question. It is much rather a question of a centuries-old long-drawn-out pernicious weakness, by which we under-estimate our own nationality and believe that we only gained grace by virtue of humanism. In other words, we have succumbed to the Mediter-

**Der Norden in der Bildenden Kunst Westeuropas.* Heidnisches Und Christliches Um Das Jahr 1000 herausgegeben von: *Josef Strzygowski.*

ranean idea, a sentiment due to the general preference enjoyed by the South, implying that everything is barbaric which is not of the same southern type. One need only weigh, in the sphere of religious representation, Titian, who is everywhere praised up to the skies, against our Gruenewald, to see how senseless we have hitherto been in the estimation of our own national worth. That, however, is only one example of a kind we are not immediately concerned with now; it becomes much more vexatious, if we go back to the beginning. For some time art history has been interested whenever any exposition relative to the East comes into consideration. Now we must take into consideration the much more serious Northern question. We must be on our guard against art historians who, brought up in the spirit of classical archaelogy, would like to extend to the North the horizon which strictly belongs to the South and especially the Mediterranean."§

So much has been written about the Greek ideal that it is rather embarrassing to know in what direction to turn for an authoritative statement. We begin by assuming that Greek art is a unity, which is far from the case. Greek art of the Archaic period is essentially barbaric and even Greek architecture has a lost ancestry in a wood architecture which may have come from the North. In fact, if Greek art owes all its energy and élan to the Dorian invasion, who, we may ask, were the Dorians? I don't pretend to know the latest answer to that question, but there is more than a suspicion that they were barbarians from the North. But all this field of conjecture we can ignore, for by Greek art we mean the ripe or mature style of the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.—the classical period proper. If there was a barbarian strain in Greek art originally, it had all disappeared by this time—presumably under the influence of habitat and climate and the more direct influences of the art of Egypt and Asia Minor.

It is almost a platitude to say that the Greek view of art was the Greek view of life. An aesthetic standard was introduced into every sphere of activity—into religion, ethics and athletics, as well as into all modes of making things. The Greek conception of 'beauty' was very comprehensive, and it is almost impossible to distinguish between its ethical and its aesthetic applications.

"The aesthetic and ethical spheres" writes Lowes Dickinson, "were never sharply distinguished by the Greeks; and it follows that as, on the one hand, their conception of the good was identified with that of the beautiful, so, on the other hand, their conception of the beautiful was identified with that of the good. Thus the most beautiful work of art, in the Greek sense of the term, was that which made the finest and most harmonious appeal not only to the physical but to the moral sense, and while communicating the highest and most perfect pleasure to the eye or the ear, had also the power to touch and inform the soul with the grace which was her moral excellence."

But grace, as we shall see, was no transcendental quality: it was the beauty of reason, an objective quality due to material and measurable proportions or canons. The imponderable elements in Greek art really reside in its content, not in its form—in the representation of human character and human ideals. Greek sculpture, for example, aims at the representation not only of beauty in number and proportion, but of character, and further of character idealized. The artist works from an *intellectual* conception (and I would emphasize the word *intellectual* in view of what I shall have to say

§Strzygowski became a nationalistic fanatic, and the political deducations which he made from his historical researches were illogical and perverse. This is not an adequate excuse for ignoring the factual content of his scholarship. [1945.]

of the barbarian ideal), "bent not simply on a graceful harmony of lines, but on the representation of a character at once definite and ideal." It follows that the aim of the Greek artists was "not merely to reproduce, but to transcend nature." To quote Lowes Dickinson again:

> "In the Greek view, in fact, physical and moral excellence went together, and it was excellence they sought to depict in their art; not merely aesthetic beauty, though that was a necessary presupposition, but on the top of that, ideal types of character representative of their conception of the hero and the god. Art, in a word, was subordinate to the ethical ideal; or rather, the ethical and aesthetic ideals were not yet dissociated and the greatest artists the world has ever known [there you have the classicist's presumption creeping in] worked deliberately under the direction and inspiration of the ideas that controlled and determined the life of their time."

We shall find that the barbarians, too, have their ideals and worked deliberately under the direction and inspiration of the ideas that controlled and determined the life of their time. What I want to emphasize now, for the sake of the contrast I am going to make, is the intellectual nature of Greek idealism in art. For this purpose I would like to quote from an excellent but what I imagine is a little-known book on *The Aesthetic Basis of Greek Art* by Professor Rhys Carpenter of Bryn Mawr College, America:

> "We said that in the time of Polykleitos the sculptured human body was put together from a series of parts each of which had a more or less intellectualised or geometricised shape and structure. Out of these the sculptor put his figure together somewhat as the architect built up his Orders out of their component members. Now in architecture it was patent that the relative shapes and sizes of these members determined the fitness and rightness of the whole Order. Since the parts of an architectural Order are man-devised and not copied to imitate living things, the architect can determine their sizes to suit himself or rather to suit those peculiar demands of fitness and rightness. But if fitness and rightness are a function of relative shapes and sizes, they must be produced by ratios, by number. Number, at work in all the elements engenders the perfection which is their beauty.
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> "There was in the fifth century, an obvious parallel between the architectural Order and the sculptural Order of the human statue. This, too, was put together out of parts each of a standard shape. Here, too, the fitness and rightness of the whole somehow depended on the relative sizes of these parts. What more natural than to draw the same conclusion and believe that Number here too was sovereign? Number is certainly sovereign in Nature to a most amazing extent (far more than we ordinarily dream, until we pick up a pamphlet on phyllotaxis or shell-formation or proportional growth), and the Greek may well have known this, especially as the Pythagoreans seem to have taught specifically such a doctrine. In any case there is little doubt that number was introduced into sculpture as it had been into architecture, and, probably, into the vase shapes of pottery.
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> "The *locus classicus* is in Galen, where the following passage occurs:
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> 'Chrysippos holds beauty to consist in the proportions not of the elements but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger and of all the fingers to the palm and wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the parts to each other as they are set forth in the Canon of Polykleitos.'
>
> "Here we have a clear statement, from a somewhat late and round-about source, but expressed in just the language we should have anticipated. Commensurability of parts is the working of Number in sculpture and the earnest of its perfection. There is an almost metaphysical belief that beauty and the ideal type for sculptural representation are characterised by an almost supersensual, because intellectual and mathematical, structure."

This notion of a canon of perfection, a type-form which should satisfy the reason in its quest for perfection, is the dominant characteristic of the whole classical tradition, not only in the plastic arts, but in literature too.

LES TROIS JUGES — Georges Rouault

(Tate Gallery, London)

There has been some attempt to prove that such a canon, or type form, is given in nature, and is therefore not so much an intellectual notion, but rather an organic fact. The proportion known as the Golden Section, so extensively used in Greek art and in the art of the Classical Revival, can be found in the morphology of plants and crystals, for example, and extremists have not hesitated to claim it as a key to the structure of the universe. But such wide claims for this particular proportion are inadmissable. The Golden Section is certainly not an exclusive factor in art; not in classical art. Other proportions—even the simple square and the relation of the radius of a circle to its circumference, can be postulated and discovered playing their part in classical art; and nature has a way of disregarding all proportions whatsoever.

In reducing this description of the classical ideal in art to a summary definition we have, it seems, to reconcile two factors: a respect for the organic, the vital and the natural; and an affirmation of the primacy of reason. But that is precisely what Greek art is: a *rational* interpretation of *natural* facts, the *organic* lifted on to the plane of the *intellect*, the vital seeking a point of equilibrium in *perfection*. And so beautiful, so inspiring, so life-enhancing is such a reconciliation, that it has again and again reasserted itself in the history of mankind.

But that it is not the only ideal, I will now attempt to show by defining the barbarian ideal. It will not be so easy, because we must put on one side the inherited prejudices of four centuries of education in the classical ideal.

The plea made by Strzygowski suggests where we should look for the barbarian ideal. Circumspice! We should look around us—not at the objects we have imported from distant Greece and Rome, not at the stylistic imitations of classical architecture which surround us on all sides, but beyond these, to the early Gothic churches, and beyond these to the still purer Norman and Celtic churches, to the few remains of the sculpture, the woodwork, the ivories and the manuscripts of the early Christian and even the pre-Christian era. There we shall find an art which owes nothing to Greek art, which repudiates all its essential ideals, which is based on a totally different conception of the aesthetic function: in fact, a contrary and alternative ideal.

Although there have been occasional archaeologists who have treated such art with veneration, it is only within quite recent years that it has been treated for what it is—I mean simply as art. Because before our eyes could enjoy the forms of such art, we had to rid them of the blinding prejudices of all those centuries of education in the classical ideal. Then from the neglected monuments of our northern art we had painfully to reconstruct the ideal which lay behind it, the ideal which animated our distant ancestors.

This Northern art, let us frankly call it barbarian art, has its origins far back in the Hallstadt and La Tène period—its ultimate roots even earlier, in the geometric art of the neolithic age. Its principal field of development is Northern and Central Europe, and it comprises, as time goes on, the art of the Migration period, Celtic and Viking art, Merovingian art, Romanesque art and early Gothic art. Essentially the style is a development of the geometric style peculiar to primitive man of the new stone age, a

style which was at one time the universal Aryan style and which entered Greece at the time of the Doric migration. There it gradually became reconciled with the indigenous Mediterranean culture and classical art is the final result of this fusion. But in the North there was no such fusion. In the Northern and Central European conglomerate of nations, the neolithic geometric style evolved with its own impetus. It was at first an art of ornament and the ornament is purely abstract in character. All attempt at a direct reproduction of nature is lacking. It is a purely geometric interplay of lines, the familiar interlaced ribbon or plaited ornament of Celtic art.

A German historian has described its character in these words:

"There are certain simple motives whose interweaving and commingling determines the character of this ornament. At first there is only the dot, the line, the ribbon; later the curve, the circle, the spiral, the zigzag, and an S-shaped decoration are employed. Truly no great wealth of motives! But what variety is attained by the manner of their employment! Here they run parallel, then entwined, now latticed, now knotted, now plaited, then again brought through one another in a symmetrical chequer of knotting and plaiting. Fantastically confused patterns are thus evolved, whose puzzle asks to be unravelled, whose convolutions seem alternately to seek and avoid each other, whose component parts, endowed as it were with sensibility, captivate sight and sense in passionately vital movement."

The general sense of such ornament is one of vitality without any organic life. A peculiar super-organic vitality. Galvanised geometry!

When we contemplate classical ornament in all its organic naturalness, we feel that it springs sympathetically from our own sense of being: it is part of our own vitality. But when we contemplate northern geometric ornament, then we submit to something alien to our being, a movement and vitality outside us, which appears to have a life of its own which is in no sense a reflection or extension of our own organic existence.

Now this is the crux of the whole question, and we must understand this difference in all its psychological implications. All art naturally involves an effort of the will—an intention directed to a particular end. We call that the will-to-form. These two types of art which I have been describing really resolve into a difference of direction in that will-to-form. In the one case, in classical art, from a state of acceptance and enjoyment of his physical being, the artist proceeds to create sensuous forms in sympathy with the organic forms of nature. In the other case, in northern barbaric art, from a state of renunciation of the flesh and of spiritual unrest, the artist proceeds to create forms of a non-sensuous, metaphysical appeal. Or rather, forms of a super-sensuous appeal, the final outcome of which was that tremendous super-human creation—the Gothic cathedral—that transcendentalism in stone, as Worringer has called it.*

Let me repeat and emphasize: the essential character of northern or barbaric art derives solely and entirely from its absence of life, its utterly abstract character. As time goes on, and northern man learns to trust life more, to feel more sympathy for organic growth, the abstract geometrical character of the line gradually weakens. But it is never transformed into

*Cf. Novalis, the first fully conscious philosopher of romanticism:
"Der Künstler ist durch aus transzendental . . . Poesie ist die grosse Kunst der Konstruktion der transzendentalen Gesundheit. Der Poet ist also der transzendentale Arzt . . . Der Genie überhaupt ist poetisch. Wo das Genie gewirkt hat—hat es poetisch gewirkt. Der echt moralische Mensch ist Dichter."

the sensuous naturalism of the classical ideal. It never affirms nature to the extent of making it the ideal, the type of perfection. Perfection, says the northern man, does not belong to this world, or to this existence. We cannot know it and need not seek it. We must accept our dualistic destiny; what is beyond the senses must be expressed in super-sensuous forms—in abstractions; what is within the senses must remain in the senses, without admixture of the divine. And so we get eventually that other dominant characteristic of northern art, its *realism*. And our greatest achievement—the greatest achievement of the barbarians—is precisely to refuse this compromise between the real and the ideal which is classical art; to maintain the earthliness of our human effort, and even in the greatest and most solemn representations of our religious life, to remember that the Son of God was made manifest in the flesh. That, it seems to me, is the clue to the spirit of such artists as Rubens and Rembrandt.

Let me observe one further consequence of this realism, which explains one of the most distinctive characteristics of northern art. Because he has no conception of the orderliness of nature, no ideal conception to which his representation must be reduced, the northern artist accepts nature in all her actuality. He does not seek a mean, a divine average: he sees everything, acutely. The world in all its detail and accident presses on him, and in all its manifestation is equally valid. And so the barbarian artist fills his pictures with manifold detail and movement. Compared with the classical artist, he is incredibly naïve. This characteristic leads northern art into danger: it leads to the sacrifice of form to content, to an emphasis on allegorical and literary significance, a fault which the classical critic can often only too justly charge against northern art. But it is not difficult for the barbarian to retort with examples of classical art empty of everything but a banal formula devoid of all human or emotional significance.

To express this distinction in another way, when we come to the Renaissance period, we find two contending principles in art—one which makes for richness of content, the other for unity of expression. I do not think that these contending principles can be absolutely equated with the ideals of the Barbarians and the Greeks. Roger Fry, in discussing the distinction, takes Van Eyck to represent one principle, Rubens to represent the other—both northern barbarians, though Rubens, in the course of his Italian studies, had perhaps acquired classical prejudices. But two principles are involved—two orders of unity. One, the order of Van Eyck, is essentially poetic and imaginative; the other, the order of Rubens, but still more the order of Raphael, is visual. One gets its coherence from its underlying *idea*, the other from its formal *pattern*. Idea and pattern: it looks as though we had reversed the characteristics we started out from—the geometric pattern of early Northern art, the intellectual canon of classical art. But a little reflection shows to us that the *idea* of a northern artist like Van Eyck is translated into realistic terms, whereas the pattern of a classical artist like Raphael seeks expression in idealistic types.

It is possible to say that there is a third alternative, a reconciliation of these principles—and realism can undoubtedly be reconciled with the unity of expression given by a formal pattern. Rubens is a great example of such a reconciliation. Yes, there is such a compromise—but whom does it

satisfy? Neither the Greeks nor the Barbarians—but possibly the man without any racial prejudices. But does he exist? Perhaps only in the future.

In conclusion, I hope that nothing I have said has given you the impression that I have been attacking the classical ideal. I am only objecting to its exclusiveness, and perhaps a little to the snobbery of its exponents. The only enemy is prejudice, and there is a barbarian prejudice as well as a Greek prejudice. I do not want to substitute Norse for Greek, or German for Latin, in the curricula of our schools. I merely want to free the sensibility from the fetters of pedantic affectations of all kinds. Art, wherever it appears, and in whatever form, is a mode of expression, a direct reaction of man to his environment; and its intention is to communicate—to communicate emotion or feeling. That is all, and it is quite simple. But if you begin to talk about BEAUTY, for example—then I begin to suspect a prejudice. You at once begin to think in terms of Polycleitos—and once you begin *to think at all* in art, you are lost.

If I have attacked anything, it is certainly not the classical art of Greece. That had its justification in the racial and climatic conditions of its origins. But what was good for Greece more than two thousand years ago is not necessarily good for all time or for all countries. The great periods of art have never been imitative, and this is true above all of Greek art. We have to explain the serious fact that since the revival of the classical ideal in the 16th century, the visual arts have steadily declined in Europe. Why? I cannot come to any other conclusion than that there was a fatal misconception of the very nature and function of art involved in the Classical Revival. Contrast the fate of the art of music, which had no classical ideal to appeal to and which has flourished as no other art since the 16th century. Divorce art from nature (and by nature I mean the internal world of the spirit as well as the external world of phenomena) and you cut away its roots. The classical ideal is a wrong ideal in so far as it presupposes that nature is imperfect and that it is the business of the artist to discover ideal modes of being, ideal forms or types. That lands the artist in an impossible intellectualist atmosphere, where the only mode of creation is imitation. And when he further presupposes that even the ideal is not to be discovered—that it was discovered long ago for all time by the artists of Greece, then the creative faculty is at a standstill. From that misconception we have been rescued by the modern movement, beginning in this country with Constable and Turner, continued in France by Cézanne and Matisse. That movement has gathered momentum year by year, and now we can be sure that Europe has the prospect of a new Renaissance of the arts. And what shall we call the artists of this new Renaissance—Greeks or Barbarians? Barbarians, surely, but to be true to nature and to one's natural feelings—is that not also to be a Greek with the Greeks? For it is not the form that we should imitate, but the spirit.

Harry Herschkowitz

The Shoulder Birds

A lean Chinese coolie is bringing me ashore in his sampan boat. His backside bobs and squirms in front of me as he forces the oars in a forward overhand movement. We pass battleships, cruisers, cargo ships and fishing boats. I perceive Singapore indistinctly. The city is veiled in a fog which droops and sags like a worn rubber waterbottle. The odour of the harbour is gregarious and agonizing with the scent of sweetness that inhabits Asia from Baghdad to Shanghai, which exudes from the passionate embrace of lovers in the furthest corners of the Earth. It is the same odour that the whale gives forth in his body—the morbid holy odour of ambergris.

Once ashore I climb into a jinrickshaw. The coolie sets off in the direction of the New World. I remember his blood-flecked eyes and listen to the chop-chop movement of his sturdy legs as they crawl run over the pavement. After a while he is panting hard. It is the hour of dusk and I am aware that he has been at it all day. We stop in a small alley where there is a coffee shop. I order for both of us and insist that he sit with me. He is suspicious but agrees. The boy who is serving us has one arm. He serves arrogantly and I like his attitude. I try to make conversation with him but he doesn't want to talk. Finally, a thought strikes me. Where on earth could an independent Chinese underdog come from? I mention the Chinese Red Army. He looks at me contemptuously. I salute him with a closed fist raised. He reciprocates and his eyes become warm. He speaks English clearly. He tells me briefly that he fought with the Chinese Red Army and then alludes to the long trek from the interior of China to Singapore after losing his arm in battle. I promise to return in a day and leave. I know that I will never see him again.

An hour later we arrive in the New World. I leave the coolie and examine the oriental Coney Island of the world. I observe pin ball games, crazy riding apparatus, a burlesque show presented by a madman featuring a strip tease show by Chinese girls who have long ago become wasted as prostitutes. I walk out and observe the Chinese hawkers heckling the crowd. Soon I am in front of a free for all Chinese show. The players are masked. They babble their mumbo jumbo in Chinese. The bodies writhe and squirm. The masks and hands touch the audience with laughter. I am indifferent. A tiny Chinese girl no more than seven years of age bums a cigarette from me. I light it for her. She strides off proudly, puffing furiously. A few prostitutes give me the eye as I sip a beer. I want an experience which will be more beautiful or painful than Singapore reveals to the Westerner. I want to touch the mysterious ancient heart of the Orient. I want to prostrate myself to Gods I have never known. Things are not working out. The

door is locked and the key has been thrown away. I am being compressed in an unreal Chinese wine jar. Everything is in the jar: The resigned coolies, the drunken Australian troops, the Old World, the New World, the disk of the sun, the exhibitionists, the pearls from Persia, the white blood, the jewels and stones from Ceylon, the English guns, the vomit, the Hindu coffee shops beating out the Hindu blues from blackened phonographs—eee—yaah—ee—ee—ya, the thieves and murderers, the temples, domes, minarets, the Chinese gardens, the paunchy bodies, the slitted eyes revealing the ulcers of the soul, the perfume of death, the naïveté of children, the stench of Asia's vast sewer that pollutes everything that is doomed, the American sailors clutching frantically at the prostitutes, the trillion sounds of pain, evil and perversity, and the opium smoker who sits and looks into the jar while I squirm with the others eating my spattered brains. I am aching to touch life or death once, but completely. The jar is whirling madly—Singapore July 1941—but Time is patient, the hour glass is running low—the sands burn into the mind—the future! but who knows anything when the present is unfathomable—when we cannot know ourselves to ourselves?

Personally, I refuse to experience despair. I turn my back on the prosaic and the obvious. I begin to feel cruel, tortured; soon the calculating side of my nature is awake. I've roamed the entire city. I've turned down every prostitute and I have disenchanted myself from the sensual intensity of the masses of troops and sailors, the nauseous smell of food, the cries of anguish, and the silence which pulsates from the heart of the nebulous night. I am reborn as a monster personifying perversity.

I climb to the top of the jar and stare coldly at the opium smoker. He has an enigmatic dispassionate face. Perhaps his face is reflecting my face! I leap over the side of the jar casually. I hear his cackling submerged laughter as I find myself in another jar. I leap out of dozens of jars, but there is always another waiting to receive me packed with human vermin, Oriental streets, colourful bazaars, and pople floating in their oozing substances.

In one jar I discover a bird shop. There isn't anything anywhere to compare with an Oriental bird shop. The cages are there. The birds sing or moan. The stench is there also—of bird droppings, of feathery sweat, of weakened wings, of disease, of sympathy in a world without sympathy, of seeds that are festering, of murky, dungy water, of beauty torn from the free heart of nature to wilt and die diabolically under the human microscopic eye—the eye of cruelty. There are also the birds that do not sing and thereby sing loudest. They sing the song of the silence. The secret cosmic song of mystery that blends grief to the soul, the grief that questions God for permitting ecstasy and pain, love and death, beauty and horror to remain interlocked in the riddle of time. When I look at this bird alone in a dirty cage, preparing quietly for death, I feel that I too am this bird, and not only I but you also, and I understand in my humility how we want to forget together this thing of grief which we always contains, which is always consuming us, but we will never actually forget this because, through the bird dying quietly in us, we shall each come to know the fulfilment which is the destiny of all.

There are also tiny birds that I saw in India. In their cages I see another scene. I see the human beings—the prostitutes in the cages of Bombay. I remember how I went to the cages in Bombay and witnessed the hangover from the past—women in cages who are to be had for a few rupees for the night at your own risk. I see the dark streets and the mutilated cries ring in my ears. The bars are on all the windows and doors. The deformed pathetic creatures are following me by the hundreds—the starving poor of India. I can see them multiplying in hundreds of thousands and hundreds of millions. We forget so quickly when we are fed and comfortable. I see also the specimens who are terribly diseased, with their festering sores, and even those who are not deformed but retain a will to conquer by begging from the prostitutes in the cages who have been assembled from Poona, Afghanistan and God only knows where. The cage is the temple as it was in Persepolis and babel. The moan is still heard from the buried ruins of Ctesiphon.

I wipe out memory and again I am in the bird shop. I look at the Bulbul bird. The Bulbul bird is proud. The Bulbul bird is like my Chinese friend who was in the Chinese Red Army during an almost endless chain of excruciating experiences. I watch two Bulbuls whistling. They are the size of robins full grown, with dark purple oily feathers. They jump to their swings in the cage and shake their feathery wings coyly. The owner of the shop watches me. He tries to sell me a large Malay parrot that speaks Chinese and coughs like an elderly man in the throes of a sensual experience. The face of the owner is repressed with sadistic lust. I have an urge to pull his head off and smash it on the floor. I know it will pop like an egg and then it will be soggy wet—slithery; snaky chunks of brain, blood, veins, brittle bone and Chinese hair. I can stamp it with my feet until it is a purple pulpy mass, until it soaks into the floor and disappears. I hate a cruel face more than anything in the world. His eyes are reading the tension in my face; he smiles sweetly. I pat him on his cheek jowl and his mouth drools a little for me. I walk out gayly, determined to return again. It is all formulating in my mind intuitively!

I return to the New World and wend my way to the red light district by leaping over several jars. The opium smoker is dozing. I pat his leg as I search for the boss pimp. After innumerable inquiries I am in his presence. He has a fine voluptuous face and understands my needs. He speaks slowly, comfortably. He has everything at hand for everyone if they will ask politely. I describe what I want. She must be an exquisite child almost innocent, a sheltered girl who is cast to play her part in a dream that is maddening to my intense impulses; above all, she must be as haunting in her reality as the breath of the lotus flower. He bows to me and urges me to follow him. He takes me to a common brothel. The soldiers and sailors are lined up. They are waiting their turn. A few girls who are tired are resting. I feel disgust and start walking away. He grabs my arm and assures me that he understands exactly what I want if I will be patient. I enter the brothel with him and walk through several partitions.. In the extreme rear an elderly woman is waiting. She is clad in black except for colourful slippers. He talks rapidly to her and urges me to follow her. I walk up a flight of stairs. She ushers me into a low

room and leaves. The room is filled with beautiful plants, perfume and incense. On a long low bed a Chinese girl is reclining. I walk over to her. She looks up at me casually. She is indeed as the breath of the lotus flower. I pretend that I am not overwhelmed. I walk downstairs and talk to the pimp. I tell him that his choice in feminine beauty intrigues me. I shower compliments on him for his understanding. I ask the price. He smiles and doesn't answer. I tell him that I want her for two nights. He guarantees that I will have her for the two nights. I pull out money but he just smiles and pats me on the shoulder in friendly fashion. I shake hands with him warmly and go up the stairs to her. She is still reclining, chewing dainty Chinese sweets. I sit down on a hassock and stare at her. I drink in her beauty and am happy. I don't want anything else. I just want to look at her. I sit all night in the jar looking at her. The opium smoker's beard is hanging over us. The world can explode now and it won't matter. The important thing is that I am happy. She watches me indifferently at first and then with mounting curiosity. I sit and stare, seeing as if not seeing. She exposes a delicate leg but I pretend not to notice. She runs one hand over her firm tiny breasts and exposes them. I look at the blue veins in them. I sit there staring, wanting to taste. I look up at the opium smoker. He is snoring musically. She becomes angry and pouts. Then she stares at me, and finally she feigns fright. I am apparently unmoved.

As day breaks I leave without so much as a glance in her direction. Before I get to the door she has leaped out of bed and rushed to my side. Her pointed tiny foot kicks at me and I feel her heel hitting my shin, She screams angrily. I push her aside and start down the stairs. I know how deeply I insulted her. To go to a woman in the Orient and refuse to sleep with her is the most humiliating insult. I pass the woman in black and put a few coins in her hand; I tell her I will come again at night. I don't want her to forget. She nods her head.

I return to the ship anchored in the harbour and work several hours. I sleep in the afternoon. In the evening I am again in the sampan boat, and before long I am in the bird shop, intensifying my frustration with thoughts of the Chinese girl. I buy two Bulbul fledglings and take them in a cage. I am back in a jar and the opium smoker looks at me naughtily. Soon I am at the brothel. The woman in black bows as I pass. The Bulbuls are silent and unseen in the paper covered cage under my arm. The girl screams as I open the door. She is furious with hate and yet, like a vein pumping blood, fear is circulating through her. I unwrap the papers and hand her the cage. She is transformed with joy. She kisses me and dances wildly around the room. She puts water in the cage and, as she sits down to be friendly, I feel a deep tenderness towards her. I take the fledglings out. I watch her face as they flit about the room. One lands on her shoulder and one lands on my shoulder. They fly back and forth, alternating between her shoulders and my shoulders, "See!" I shout, "shoulder birds! Shoulder birds!" She is a happy child. The game of lust and degradation is over. The birds nip at our cheeks and peck at our ears. They whistle a beautiful haunting melody. The feathers are soft, the hearts beat strongly in our hands. We dance around the room and fool the birds, as they fly toward

us, by turning aside just as they want to land. The birds find a fig and peck at it. Their feathery wings shake and their furry necks toss from side to side. We are birds also. We spread our wings and fly around. The birds fly after us and we fly after the birds. The opium smoker stares into the jar and casts his blessings on our heads. In the jar with us is everything else that does not matter to us: the rotted core of Asia, the maniacs, the howl, the minarets, the Buddhas, the feathers of all the fledglings, the Himalayas, the strange secret cities of Isfahan and Delhi, the Gobi desert, the Yangtze-Kiang. The magical names are there—like Sinkiang, Penang and Bandar Abbas. The Japanese are on their way to Singapore, the riots are destroying hundreds in Bombay, the Iraquian Revolution, the war in Europe, the march of the Yogi Masters, the goat prancing off the back of the elephant, the endless confusion of it all, and the birds singing and flying, billions of them, and the cruel purity of the religious sadists, and the resigned, always the resigned, movement of the Oriental, and the tiptoeing feet of the coolies, and more, so much more, that I could never include it all; the broken dwarfed sobs in lonely corners of the earth like where you are now, the continuity of incestuous strangulation of the jungles, the leper's smell, the headhunters' dance in Borneo, and the sulphurous stars burning, bleeding, breeding space, and the lice crawling down the beard of the opium smoker . . . It is all in the room flight! It goes on and on for a long time. She dresses and undresses. I must select her prettiest kimona. I must select her perfume. I must smell her body as if she were going with another man, another lover. I must see that each curl on her head is just so, and I must help her manicure her toe nails; the birds are in the kimona, and I must fish them out, and I am caught in the kimona while she pretends to strangle me as I kiss her navel, and the clang is clanging, and the dances are being danced. The cobras are shedding their skins and America has disappeared into the past with all of the chicanery of machines and human automatons. We are rolling on the floor, shedding our skins—playing snake, and the birds are walking on my back, or is it her hand tickling me, and a feather is in my nose, or is it her eye lashes, and somehow the lights are out and the jar is whirling into sensuous perfection as we roll and squirm, with the birds whistling in our ears and her peals of laughter like chimes in a hidden temple. Everything is wondrous, sensuous and divine. The nightingales are in her voice as she sings to me between torn sobs of tenderness; she is trying to reach me through verbal talk but I hear only the talk of the heart. She is agonizingly tender as the nightingales fly out of her mouth flecked with her falling tears. The opium smoker is keeping time with his head slightly cocked; with one finger he turns the nightingales around and around. They are coming out in droves and all are waiting their turn to revolve around the opium smoker's finger before setting off for the mystic temples in Thibet. His finger is sending them off faster and faster. Everything is becoming tinier and more delicate. We are living in the soul of ecstasy. The façades of a million years have disappeared. The essences in us are pure. The lady in back brings coffee and Chinese wine. We sip and nibble cakes. I get up like a sleepwalker. I put the birds in the cage then I start for the door. She runs toward me, trying to hold me with one hand and the birds with the other. She is full

of tenderness and hurt. The nightingales are flying sadly out of her throat and the perfume of the lotus blossom is in her breath as she pleads. I try to move but the wall of her body stops me. I hesitate for a second, and then my free hand slaps her across the mouth. She reels and stumbles to the floor. She cries bitterly with bleeding nightingales tumbling out of the corners of her mouth. I laugh. I slam the door on her. I notice the beard of the opium smoker hanging in the jar. I climb up slowly and I feel the pain in the hand that slapped. I am careful not to drop the Bulbuls. They are singing wildly—frantically trying to turn me back. I pull the central hair out of the beard and the opium smoker tsk tsk's in Chinese. I'm off for the ship with the Bulbuls.

Six weeks later the Bulbuls are sick and I am passing through the Panama Canal. I feel sad and toss them overboard.

Henry Miller

Obscenity and the Law of Reflection

To discuss the nature and meaning of obscenity is almost as difficult as to talk about God. Until I began delving into the literature which has grown up about the subject I never realized what a morass I was wading into. If one begins with etymology one is immediately aware that lexicographers are bamboozlers every bit as much as jurists, moralists and politicians. To begin with, those who have seriously attempted to track down the meaning of the term are obliged to confess that they have arrived nowhere. In their book, *To the Pure,* Ernst and Seagle state that "no two persons agree on the definitions of the six deadly adjectives: obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, indecent, disgusting." The League of Nations was also stumped when it attempted to define what constituted obscenity. D. H. Lawrence was probably right when he said that "nobody knows what the word 'obscene' means." As for Theodore Schroeder, who has devoted his whole life to fighting for freedom of speech[1], his opinion is that "obscenity does not exist in any book or picture, but is wholly a quality of the reading or viewing mind." "No argument for the suppression of 'obscene' literature," he states, "has ever been offered which by unavoidable implications will not justify, and which has not already justified, every other limitation that has ever been put upon mental freedom."

As some one has well said, to name all the masterpieces which have been labelled obscene would make a tedious catalogue. Most of our choice

[1] See his *A Challenge to Sex Censors* and other works.

writers, from Plato to Havelock Ellis, from Aristophanes to Shaw, from Catullus and Ovid to Shakespeare, Shelley and Swinburne, together with the Bible, to be sure, have been the target of those who are forever in search of what is impure, indecent or immoral. In an article called "Freedom of Expression in Literature"[2], Huntington Cairns, one of the most broad-minded and clear-sighted of all the censors, stresses the need for the re-education of officials charged with law enforcement. "In general," he states, "such men have had little or no contact with science or art, have had no knowledge of the liberty of expression tacitly granted to men of letters since the beginnings of English literature, and have been, from the point of view of expert opinion, altogether incompetent to handle the subject. Administrative officials, not the populace who in the main have only a negligible contact with art, stand first in need of re-education."

Perhaps it should be noted here, in passing, that though our federal government exercises no censorship over works of art originating in the country, it does permit the Treasury Department to pass judgment upon importations from abroad. In 1930 the Tariff Act was revised to permit the Secretary of the Treasury, in his discretion, to admit the classics or books of recognized and established literary or scientific merit, even if obscene. What is meant by "books of recognized and established literary merit"? Mr. Cairns gives the following interpretation: "books which have behind them a substantial and reputable body of American critical opinion indicating that the works are of meritorious quality." This would seem to represent a fairly liberal attitude, but when it comes to a test, when a book or other work of art is capable of creating a furore, this seeming liberality collapses. It has been said with regard to the Sonnets of Aretino that they were condemned for four hundred years. How long we shall have to wait for the ban to be lifted on certain famous contemporary works no one can predict. In the article alluded to above, Mr. Cairns admits that "there is no likelihood whatever that the present obscenity statutes will be repealed." "None of the statutes," he goes on to say, "defines the word 'obscenity', and there is thus a wide latitude of discretion in the meaning to be attributed to the term." Those who imagine that the *Ulysses* decision established a precedent should realize by now that they were over-optimistic. Nothing has been established where books of a disturbing nature are concerned. After years of wrestling with prudes, bigots and other psychopaths who determine what we may or may not read, Theodore Schroeder is of the opinion that "it is not the inherent quality of the book which counts, but its hypothetical influence upon some hypothetical person, who at some problematical time in the future may hypothetically read the book."

In his book called *A Challenge to Sex Censors,* Mr. Schroeder quotes an anonymous clergyman of a century ago to the effect that "obscenity exists only in the minds that discover it and charge others with it." This rather obscure work contains most illuminating passages; in it the author attempts to show that, by a law of reflection in nature, every one is the performer of acts similar to those he attributes to others; that self-preservation is self-destruction, etc. This wholesome and enlightened viewpoint, attainable,

[2] From *The Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, November 1938

it would seem, only by the rare few, comes nearer to dissipating the fogs which envelop the subject than all the learned treatises of educators, moralists, scholars and jurists combined. In Romans xiv 14 we have it presented to us axiomatically for all time: "I know and persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." How far one would get in the courts with this attitude, or what the postal authorities would make of it, surely no sane individual has any doubts about.

A totally different point of view, and one which deserves attention, since it is not only honest and forthright but expressive of the innate conviction of many, is that voiced by Havelock Ellis, that obscenity is a "permanent element of human social life and corresponds to a deep need of the human mind."[3] Ellis indeed goes so far as to say that "adults need obscene literature, as much as children need fairy tales, as a relief from the oppressive force of convention." This is the attitude of a cultured individual whose purity and wisdom have been acknowledged by eminent critics everywhere. It is the worldly view which we profess to admire in the Mediterranean peoples. Ellis, being an Englishman, was of course persecuted for his opinions and ideas upon the subject of sex. From the nineteenth century on, all English authors who dared to treat the subject honestly and realistically have been persecuted and humiliated. The prevalent attitude of the English public is, I believe, fairly well presented in such a piece of polished inanity as Viscount Brentford's righteous self-defence—"Do We Need a Censor"? Viscount Brentford is the gentleman who tried to protect the English public from such iniquitous works as *Ulysses* and *The Well of Loneliness*. He is the type, so rampant in the Anglo-Saxon world, to which the words of Dr. Ernest Jones would seem to apply: "It is the people with secret attractions to various temptations who busy themselves with removing these temptations from other people; really they are defending themselves under the pretext of defending others, because at heart they fear their own weakness."

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As one accused of employing obscene language more freely and abundantly than any other living writer in the English language, it may be of interest to present my own views on the subject. Since the *Tropic of Cancer* first appeared in Paris, in 1934, I have received many hundreds of letters from readers all over the world; they are from men and women of all ages and all walks of life, and in the main they are congratulatory messages. Many of those who denounced the book because of its gutter language professed admiration for it otherwise; very, very few ever remarked that it was a dull book, or badly written. The book continues to sell steadily "under the counter" and is still written about at intervals even though it made its appearance ten years ago and was promptly banned in all the Anglo-Saxon countries. The only effect which censorship has had upon its circulation is to drive it underground, thus limiting the sales but at the same time insuring for it the best of all publicity—word of mouth recommendation. It is to be found in the libraries of nearly all our important colleges, is often recommended to students by their professors, and has

[3] *More Essays of Love and Virtue.*

gradually come to take its place beside other celebrated literary works which, once similarly banned or suppressed, are now accepted as classics. It is a book which appeals especially to young people and which, from all that I gather directly and indirectly, not only does not ruin their lives but increases their morale. The book is a living proof that censorship defeats itself. It also proves once again that the only ones who may be said to be protected by censorship are the censors themselves, and this only because of a law of nature known to all who over-indulge. In this connection I feel impelled to mention a curious fact often brought to my attention by booksellers, namely, that the two classes of books which enjoy a steady and ever-increasing sale are the so-called pornographic, or obscene, and the occult. This would seem to corroborate and substantiate Havelock Ellis' view which I mentioned earlier. Certainly all attempts to regulate the traffic in obscene books, just as all attempts to regulate the traffic in drugs or prostitution, is doomed to failure wherever civilization rears its head. Whether these things are a definite evil or not, whether or not they are definite and ineradicable elements of our social life, it seems indisputable that they are synonymous with what is called civilization. Despite all that has been said and written for and against, it is evident that with regard to these factors of social life men have never come to that agreement which they have about slavery. It is possible, of course, that one day these things may disappear, but it is also possible, despite the now seemingly universal disapproval of it, that slavery may once again be practised by human beings.

The most insistent question put to the writer of "obscene" literature is: why did you have to use such language? The implication is, of course, that with conventional terms or means the same effect might have been obtained. Nothing, of course, could be farther from the truth. Whatever the language employed, no matter how objectionable—I am here thinking of the most extreme examples—one may be certain that there was no other idiom possible. Effects are bound up with intentions, and these in turn are governed by laws of compulsion as rigid as nature's own. That is something which non-creative individuals seldom ever understand. Someone has said that "the literary artist, having attained understanding, communicates that understanding to his readers. That understanding, whether of sexual or other matters, is certain to come into conflict with popular beliefs, fears and taboos, because these are, for the most part, based on error." Whatever extenuating reasons are adduced for the erroneous opinions of the populace, such as lack of education, lack of contact with the arts, and so on, the fact is that there will always be a gulf between the creative artist and the public because the latter is immune to the mystery inherent in and surrounding all creation. The struggle which the artist wages, consciously or unconsciously, with the public, centres almost exclusively about the problem of a necessitous choice. Putting to one side all questions of ego and temperament, and taking the broadest view of the creative process, which makes of the artist nothing more than an instrument, we are nevertheless forced to conclude that the spirit of an age is a crucible in which, through one means or another, certain vital and mysterious forces seek expression. If there is something mysterious about the manifestation of deep and unsuspected forces, which find expression in disturbing movements

and ideas from one period to another, there is nevertheless nothing accidental or bizarre about it. The laws governing the spirit are just as readable as those governing nature. But the readings must come from those who are steeped in the mysteries. The very depth of these interpretations naturally make them unpalatable and unacceptable to the vast body which constitutes the unthinking public.

Parenthetically it is curious to observe that painters, however unapproachable their work may be, are seldom subjected to the same meddling interference as writers. Language, because it also serves as a means of communication, tends to bring about weird obfuscations. Men of high intelligence often display execrable taste when it comes to the arts. Yet even these freaks whom we all recognize, because we are always amazed by their obtuseness, seldom have the cheek to say what elements of a picture had been better left out or what substitutions might have been effected. Take, for example, the early works of George Grosz. Compare the reactions of the intelligent public in his case to the reactions provoked by Joyce when his *Ulysses* appeared. Compare these again with the reactions which Schoenberg's later music inspired. In the case of all three the revulsion which their work first induced was equally strong, but in the case of Joyce the public was more articulate, more voluble, more arrogant in its pseudo-certitude. With books, even the plumber and the butcher seem to feel that they have a right to an opinion, especially if the book happens to be what is called a filthy or disgusting one.

I have noticed, moreover, that the attitude of the public alters perceptibly when it is the work of primitive peoples which they must grapple with. Here for some obscure reason the element of the "obscene" is treated with more deference. People who would be revolted by the drawings in *Ecce Homo* will gaze unblushingly at African pottery or sculpture no matter how much their taste or morals be offended. In the same spirit they are inclined to be more tolerant of the obscene works of ancient authors. Why? Because even the dullest are capable of admitting to themselves that other epochs might, justifiably or not, have enjoyed other customs, other morals. As for the creative spirits of their own epoch, however, freedom of expression is always interpreted as licence. The artist must conform to the current, and usually hypocritical, attitude of the majority. He must be original, courageous, inspiring, and all that—but never too disturbing. He must say Yes while saying No. The larger the art public, the more tyrannical, complex and perverse does this irrational pressure become. There are always exceptions, to be sure, and Picasso is one of them, one of the few artists in our time able to command the respect and attention of a bewildered and largely hostile public. It is the greatest tribute that could be made to his genius.

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The chances are that during this transition period of global wars, lasting perhaps a century or two, art will become less and less important. A world torn by indescribable upheavals, a world preoccupied with social and political transformations, will have less time and energy to spare for the creation or appreciation of works of art. The politician, the soldier, the industrialist, the technician, all those, in short, who cater to immediate needs, to creature

comforts, to transitory and illusory passions and prejudices, will take precedence over the artist. The most poetic inventions will be those capable of serving the most destructive ends. Poetry itself will be written in terms of block-busters and lethal gases. The obscene will find expression in the almost unthinkable techniques of self-destruction which the inventive genius of man will be forced to adopt. The revolt and disgust which the prophetic spirits in the realm of art have inspired through their vision of a world in the making will find justification in the years to come as these dreams are acted out.

The growing void between art and life, art becoming ever more sensational and unintelligible, life becoming more dull and hopeless, has been commented on almost *ad nauseam*. The war, colossal and portentous as it is, has failed to arouse a passion commensurate with its scope or significance. The fervour of the Greeks and the Spaniards was something which astounded the modern world. The admiration and the horror which their ferocious struggles evoked was revelatory. We regarded them as mad and heroic, and we had almost been on the point of believing that such madness, such heroism, no longer existed. But what strikes one as "obscene", and insane rather than mad, is the stupendous machine-like character of the war which the big nations are carrying on. It is a war of material, a war of statistical preponderances, a war in which victory is coldly and patiently calculated on the basis of bigger and better resources. In the war which the Spaniards and the Greeks waged there was not only a hopelessness about the immediate outcome but a hopelessness as to the eternal outcome, so to speak. Yet they fought, and with tooth and nail, and they will fight again and again, always hopelessly and always gloriously because always passionately. As for the big powers now locked in a death struggle, one feels that they are only grooming themselves for another chance at it, for a chance to win here and now, in a victory that will be everlasting, which is an utter delusion. Whatever the outcome, one senses that life will not be altered radically but to a degree which will only make it more like what it was before the conflict started. This war has all the masturbative qualities of a combat between hopeless recidivists.

If I stress the obscene aspect of modern warfare it is not simply because I am against war but because there is something about the ambivalent emotions it inspires which enables me better to grapple with the nature of the obscene. Nothing would be regarded as obscene, I feel, if men were living out their inmost desires. What man dreads most is to be faced with the manifestation, in word or deed, of that which he has refused to live out, that which he has throttled or stifled, buried, as we say now, in his subconscious mind. The sordid qualities imputed to the enemy are always those which we recognize as our own and therefore rise to slay, because only through projection do we realize the enormity and horror of them. Man tries as in a dream to kill the enemy in himself. This enemy, both within and without, is just as, but no more, real than the phantoms in his dreams. When awake he is apathetic about this dream self, but asleep he is filled with terror. I say "when awake", but the question is, *when is he awake, if ever?* To those who no longer need to kill, the man who indulges in murder is a sleep-walker. He is a man trying to kill himself

in his dreams. He is a man who comes face to face with himself *only in the dream*. This man is the man of the modern world, everyman, as much a myth and a legend as the Everyman of the allegory. Our life to-day is what we dreamed it would be aeons ago. Always it has a double thread running through it, just as in the age-old dream. Always fear and wish, fear and wish. Never the pure fountain of desire. And so we have and we have not, we are and we are not.

In the realm of sex there is a similar kind of sleep-walking and self-delusion at work; here the bifurcation of pure desire into fear and wish has resulted in the creation of a phantasmagorical world in which love plays the rôle of a chameleon-like scapegoat. Passion is conspicuous by its absence or by monstrous deformations which render it practically unrecognizable. To trace the history of man's attitude towards sex is like threading a labyrinth whose heart is situated in an unknown planet. There has been so much distortion and suppression, even among primitive peoples, that to-day it is virtually impossible to say what constitutes a free and healthy attitude. Certainly the glorification of sex, in pagan times, represented no solution of the problem. And, though Christianity ushered in a conception of love superior to any known before, it did not succeed in freeing man sexually. Perhaps we might say that the tyranny of sex was broken through sublimation in love, but the nature of this greater love has been understood and experienced only by a rare few.

Only where strict bodily discipline is observed, for the purpose of union or communion with God, has the subject of sex ever been faced squarely. Those who have achieved emancipation by this route have, of course, not only liberated themselves from the tyranny of sex but from all other tyrannies of the flesh. With such individuals, the whole body of desire has become so transfigured that the results obtained have had practically no meaning for the man of the world. Spiritual triumphs, even though they affect the man in the street immediately, concern him little, if at all. He is seeking for solutions of life's problems on the plane of mirage and illusion; his notions of reality have nothing to do with ultimate effects; he is blind to the permanent changes which take place above and beneath his level of understanding. If we take such a type of being as the yogi, whose sole concern is with reality, as opposed to the world of illusion, we are bound to concede that he has faced every human problem with the utmost courage and lucidity. Whether he incorporates the sexual, or transmutes it to the point of transcendence and obliteration, he at least is one who has attained the vast open spaces of love. If he does not reproduce his kind, he at least gives new meaning to the word birth. In lieu of copulating he creates; in the circle of his influence conflict is stilled and the harmony of profound peace established. He is able to love not only individuals of the opposite sex but all individuals, everything that breathes, in fact. This quiet sort of triumph strikes a chill in the heart of the ordinary man, for not only does it make him visualize the loss of his meagre sex life but the loss of passion itself, passion as he knows it. This sort of liberation, which smashes his thermometrical gauge of feeling, represents itself to him as a living death. The attainment of a love which is boundless and unfettered terrifies him for the very good reason that it means the dissolution of his

ego. He does not want to be freed for service, dedication and devotion to all mankind; he wants comfort, assurance and security, the enjoyment of his very limited powers. Incapable of surrender, he can never know the healing power of faith; and lacking faith he can never begin to know the meaning of love. He seeks release but not liberation, which is like saying that he prefers death instead of life.

As civilization progresses it becomes more and more apparent that war is the greatest release which life offers the ordinary man. Here he can let go to his heart's content for here crime no longer has any meaning. Guilt is abolished when the whole planet swims in blood. The lulls of peacetime seem only to permit him to sink deeper into the bogs of the sadistic-masochistic complex which has fastened itself into the heart of our civilized life like a cancer. Fear, guilt and murder—these constitute the real triumvirate which rules our lives. What is obscene then? The whole fabric of life as we know it to-day. To speak only of what is indecent, foul, lewd, filthy, disgusting, etc., in connection with sex is to deny ourselves the luxury of the great gamut of revulsion-repulsion which modern life puts at our service. Every department of life is vitiated and corroded with what is so unthinkingly labelled "obscene". One wonders if perhaps the insane could not invent a more fitting, more inclusive term for the polluting elements of life which we create and shun and never identify with our own behaviour. We think of the insane as inhabiting a world completely divorced from reality, but our own everyday behaviour, whether in war or peace, if examined from only a slightly higher standpoint, bears all the ear-marks of insanity. "I have said," writes a well-known psychologist, "that this is a mad world; that man is most of the time mad; and I believe that in a way, what we call morality is merely a form of madness, which happens to be a working adaptation to existing circumstances."

★

When obscenity crops out in art, in literature more particularly, it usually functions as a technical device: the element of the deliberate which is there has nothing to do with sexual excitation, as in pornography. If there is an ulterior motive at work it is one which goes far beyond sex. Its purpose is to awaken, to usher in a sense of reality. In a sense, its use by the artist may be compared to the use of the miraculous by the Masters. This last minute quality, so closely allied to desperation, has been the subject of endless debate. Nothing connected with Christ's life, for example, has been exposed to such withering scrutiny as the miracles attributed to him. The great question is: should the Master indulge himself or should he refrain from employing his extraordinary powers? Of the great Zen masters it has been observed that they never hesitate to resort to any means in order to awaken their disciples; they will even perform what we would call sacreligious acts. And, according to some familiar interpretations of the Flood, it has been acknowledged that even God grows desperate at times and wipes the slate clear in order to continue the human experiment on another level.

It should be recognized, however, with regard to these questionable displays of power, that only a Master may hazard them. As a matter of fact, the element of risk exists only in the eyes of the uninitiated. The

Master is always certain of the result; he never plays his trump card, as it were, except at the psychological moment. His behaviour, in such instances, might be compared to that of the chemist pouring a last tiny drop into a prepared solution in order to precipitate certain salts. If it is a push it is also a supreme exhortation which the Master indulges in. Once the moment is passed, moreover, the witness is altered forever. In another sense, the situation might be described as the transition from belief to faith. Once faith has been established, there is no regression; whereas with belief everything is in suspense and capable of fluctuation.

It should also be recognized that those who have real power have no need to demonstrate it for themselves; it is never in their own interests, or for their own glorification, that these performances are made. In fact, there is nothing miraculous, in the vulgar sense, about these acts, unless it be the ability to raise the consciousness of the onlooker to that mysterious level of illumination which is natural to the Master. Men who are ignorant of the source of their powers, on the other hand, men who are regarded as the powers that move the world, usually come to a disastrous end. Of their efforts it is truly said that all comes to nought. On the worldly level nothing endures, because on this level, which is the level of dream and illusion, all is fear and wish vainly cemented by will.

To revert to the artist again . . . Once he has made use of his extraordinary powers, and I am thinking of the use of obscenity in just such magical terms, he is inevitably caught up in the stream of forces beyond him. He may have begun by assuming that he could awaken his readers, but in the end he himself passes into another dimension of reality wherein he no longer feels the need of forcing an awakening. His rebellion over the prevalent inertia about him becomes transmuted, as his vision increases, into an acceptance and understanding of an order and harmony which is beyond man's conception and approachable only through faith. His vision expands with the growth of his own powers, because creation has its roots in vision and admits of only one realm, the realm of imagination. Ultimately, then, he stands among his own obscene objurgations like a conqueror amidst the ruins of a devastated city. He realizes that the real nature of the obscene resides in the lust to convert. He knocked to awaken, but it was himself he awakened. And once awake, he is no longer concerned with the world of sleep; he walks in the light and, like a mirror, reflects his illumination in every act.

Once this vantage point is reached, how trifling and remote seem the accusations of the moralists! How senseless the debate as to whether the work in question was of high literary merit or not! How absurd the wrangling over the moral or immoral nature of his creation! Concerning every bold act one may raise the reproach of vulgarity. Everything dramatic is in the nature of an appeal, a frantic appeal for communion. Violence, whether in deed or speech, is an inverted sort of prayer. Initiation itself is a violent process of purification and union. Whatever demands radical treatment demands God, and always through some form of death or annihilation. Whenever the obscene crops out one can smell the imminent death of a form. Those who possess the highest clue are not impatient, even in the presence of death; the artist in words, however, is not of this order,

he is only at the vestibule, as it were, of the palace of wisdom. Dealing with the spirit, he nevertheless has recourse to forms. When he fully understands his rôle as creator he substitutes his own being for the medium of words. But in that process there comes "the dark night of the soul" when, exalted by his vision of things to come and not yet fully conscious of his powers, he resorts to violence. He becomes desperate over his inability to transmit his vision. He resorts to any and every means in his power; this agony, in which creation itself is parodied, prepares him for the solution of his dilemma, but a solution wholly unforeseen and mysterious as creation itself.

All violent manifestations of radiant power have an obscene glow when visualized through the refractive lens of the ego. All conversions occur in the speed of a split second. Liberation implies the sloughing off of chains, the bursting of the cocoon. What is obscene are the preliminary or anticipatory movement of birth, the pre-conscious writhing in the face of a life to be. It is in the agony of death that the nature of birth is apprehended. For in what consists the struggle if it is not between form and being, between that which was and that which is about to be? In such moments creation itself is at the bar: who ever seeks to unveil the mystery becomes himself a part of the mystery and thus helps to perpetuate it. Thus the lifting of the veil may be interpreted as the ultimate expression of the obscene. It is an attempt to spy on the secret processes of the universe. In this sense the guilt attaching to Prometheus symbolizes the guilt of man-the-creator, of man the arrogant one who ventures to create before being crowned with wisdom.

The pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, to experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in their own webs. If there is anything which deserves to be called "obscene" it is this oblique, glancing confrontation with the mysteries, this walking up to the edge of the abyss, enjoying all the ecstasies of vertigo and yet refusing to yield to the spell of the unknown. The obscene has all the qualities of the hidden interval. It is as vast as the unconscious itself and as amorphous and fluid as the very stuff of the Unconscious. It is what comes to the surface as strange, intoxicating and forbidden, and which therefore arrests and paralizes, when in the form of Narcissus we bend over our own image in the mirror of our own iniquity. Acknowledged by all, it is nevertheless despised and rejected, wherefore it is constantly emerging in Protean guise at the most unexpected moments. When it is recognized and accepted, whether as a figment of the imagination or as an integral part of human reality, it inspires no more dread or revulsion than could be ascribed to the flowering lotus which sends its roots down into the mud of the stream on which it is borne.

Poetry

LITANY FOR NINE A.M.

Behind a small yellow door
At the turn of the world's dread
There is a hole in the floor.
When the hands point to the hour
They will hang a man on a thread:

And the world will be stilled and the hands will be cold for a moment all of of us dead.

Behind the face of the priest
On the page of the prayer in his head
There is a space in the text,
A place for the voice that has ceased
To cry from the kissing wood:

Forgive, give them grace, oh never forsake them God.

Behind the mask of the State
Under the governor's nod
There is a break in hate.
The stone face wakes and the heart
Hears the accuser's tread:

I am near, the quick noose, I run here; am I not red?

And at the hub of the world
Under the thoughts in the hood
All the bright horror is held;
The spider waits to be killed
In a web that he never made:

And we hold the threads and the power and the hour and we spin the golden world. We are the good.

LOUIS ADEANE.

THE OLD MAN

The old man does not know the half of it.
Down in his buried room
between rock-lakes of standing gloom
resounds no tremor
from this overhead,
our stumbling lives.

For we tell no stories when awake
of our sheet-iron dream
or underground
the broad pacific flame.
And the old man has no say in us, except the twist of luck.

He is the unexploded mine, the no man's land.
How should he know
how shockingly, between the river and the open sea, the scarlet rock,
there runs a thin bright promontory winged with querying plants,
a cliff-edge stream
sprouting into air, with swivelled flowers, a dance
of earthquakes, and Johnnie still translating into Jack?

EITHNE WILKINS.

SECOND SIGHT

I have never feigned death
Even at the blackest moments there was always an eye
Hidden under my palm or a finger-nail
Either watching the shame of others' unawareness
Or just sleeping
But death is sleep that has forgotten the pass-word
(Some coined word as ineffable as the Tetragrammaton)
For the eye was lonely
Between an eye and a hand there should be always a word of love
Or a harlequinade
Or a few steel flowers
Rising from the pores of the ground
As red needles from an empty wine glass
Or as signatures from the post-cards of my memory
That each secret eye may be pierced by a flower
Is my inexpressible but ardent desire
For I no longer wish to see through walls
And the key-holes that expand and contract
I no longer wish to see the innocent faces ravaged faces questioning faces
And the decaying days
All has been seen
The retina is covered by indecipherable hieroglyphics
And minute portraits of popular heroes
I no longer wish to see the pictures that float in the galleries
In the corridors swept by wind and sand
Spurs of wind cockades of sand
Drowning the faint noise of clashing swords
And grinding teeth
For in the endless corridors death opens quietly like two fingers
And the atmosphere seems so fragile
That the closing of two fingers would shatter it into a thousand fragments

Forming senseless hieroglyphics around one's feet
No I no longer wish to see
Until the eyes hiding among the grass
Shall blossom into mandragora and asphodel and nepenthe and lotus and amaranth
And other miraculous plants
Until all the landscapes are drunk with joy
Until all the speechless windows sing forgotten songs
Until all men are as pure as their dreams
Until all the days are alight with flowers that are eyes
And all the nights are shining with eyes that are flowers
I will reject all images
For I have never feigned blindness.

SIMON WATSON TAYLOR.
November 1944.

DE PROFUNDIS

Cette nuit-là
les statues ont pris le Pouvoir
et les morts au garde-à-vous
les ont laissé passer
en chantant l'hymne d'éternité
Statues de pierre
statues de bronze
statues géantes
dans les avenues et les ronds-points.
Depuis elles ont pris
les fonderies, les usines, les banques
les casernes, les presses, les églises
les écoles
et frappent des coups sourds
sur les maisons
aux chants des sirènes
et des tocsins.
Les morts aux mains de racines
ont fait des uniformes, des soutanes
et des jupons d'infirmières
ils ont fait des chansons
présidées du Te Deum
jusqu'au parvis de Notre-Dame
Et l'on m'a dit
qu'à leurs heures de loisirs
ils coupaient aussi les cheveux
des femmes amoureuses
pour en faire des lauriers
à poser sur les lits vides
de vivants pétrifiés
et momifiés par la gloire
d'avoir vu rouge.

Alors moi
j'ai brisé simplement les vieilles pierres humides
et rompu les arbres du silence
pour me libérer du joug
des morts et des statues.

SERGE NINN

POEM ON BEING INVALIDED OUT OF THE ARMY

O then let brain fetch back its deep creative urge
—below or above normal
and wonder and exhilaration find
some evening quiet when all cares away
the mind is flushed and steadfast in its purpose
selective with a legislator's love:
heart beat clean like genius in a garret
making its Attic gift to an accepting world
irrigated by no fantasy of that old sad life
cut terrible accusing patterns in each headpiece
whose most real imagery gives some new impact
to our small bier and skeleton-bones, 'that' ghostly appearance
whose mask—or "face" can flare within the dirty bag of skin:
and like medieval types the one-per-cent
out of an insignificant and fleeting art
live on the ruler's page—despised anonymous personalities,
admonished by the other half from whose callous sanity
the whole mad recognizing world is unanimous in enormous self-redemption.

KEIDRYCH RHYS.

THE CRAZY MOTHER

Beneath the boughs of apple tree
The crazy mother sits
Her sons were shot in starlit sea
Death stroked their scattered wits.

The apples fall upon the ground
She picks one up and sings.
A serpent writhes without a sound
An angel folds his wings.

She stares in space till darkness falls
Her feckless hands lie still
Around her close the vacuous walls
Which mock her shattered will.

One silent night she took a torch
To light the world, she said,
The flaming thing her brain did scorch
And burnt her widowed bed.

JOY BAINES.

THE FUGITIVE

The stranger leant on his door, and through his window
The enemy eyes of stars burnt into his sleep.
Surrounded by foes and plucking his fear about him
He dreamed desperately of a friendly future.

He saw the quiet bodies and the empty eyes
That carried no treason, he saw the enormous forests
Where a race could vanish, and the far lonely islands
Divided by raging tides from the fearful mainland.

He saw the ice pyramid where the naked Yogi
Entered a solitary and impersonal heaven,
He saw the gardens hanging on ultimate cliffs
Of lovers alone and together over a distant sea.

But over all the journeys of his dreams
The hostile stars looked with their million eyes,
And his travels ended in that waking city
Where all the men watched him and the women were bland and false.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.

POEM

Heart remember, rain on the heart,
Earth on the struggling arms,
The golden rain and the falling light;
Birth amid moving storms.

Blood remember, rose in the blood,
Fire in the sapling veins,
The supple lust in the crimson wood;
Fear in the wooden bones.

Hand remember, stone in the hand,
Dark shape in the corn,
The crouching hill and the shadow wind
Speaking to stranger man.

Heart remember, sand on the heart,
White beaches wide;
The vacant sky and the empty boat
Waiting on last tide.

LOUIS ADEAN

SEARCHLIGHTS IN ESSEX.

Pendulum of light that swings
and ticks away the night of danger,
ferret of the unknown sky
inquisitive finger of blue-light mist.

Somewhere on earth a watcher sits
hastening time away, or bored
waiting for tea, then nervous
imagining things that are not real
in the arc-light of his adult plaything.

He has wondered once or twice
if the stars blink or are undisturbed
mocking perhaps, or aloofly uncaring.
He has learned their names and proudly greets them:
Hello Venus and Jupiter, Saturn and Mars.

But in moments of sadness he sometimes calls them:
Do you watch or care about this madness?
Is there anything beyond or deeper than this
O, Venus and Jupiter, Saturn and Mars.

WILLIAM PORRITT.

Louis Adeane

The Double Man

"So much the worse for those who ignore the natural, social law of human solidarity, to the extent of imagining that an absolute mutual independence of individuals and masses is a possible or even desirable thing. To desire it would be to wish for the destruction of society, for all social life is nothing more than this mutual and incessant dependence among individuals and masses."

BAKUNIN.

"All men are essentially independent." GODWIN.

"To wish to escape this influence in the name of a transcendental liberty, divine absolutely egoistic and sufficient to itself is the tendency to annihilation."

BAKUNIN.

"He is an ultimate being, made for his own perfection as his highest end, made to maintain an individual existence, and to serve others only as far as consists with his own virtue and progress."

SHELLEY.

★

Present-day anarchism is founded upon a paradox from which proceeds both its strength and its weakness.

On the one hand it asserts that men are predominantly social; instinctively they move towards mutual aid; in consequence, were government removed and convention abolished, society would not disintegrate but would re-form in an organic way round the units of production and distribution. From this point of view all values are social attributes: men are not naturally good, as they were in the nineteenth century, they are naturally civil. If one sees a man behaving 'badly', for instance being cruel to a child, it is not because he is evil but because his environment and cultural background have forced him to be anti-social. If his environment were

changed it would be possible for him to behave well. Government, Law, etc., are imposed upon men from without; in extremity the anarchist may even argue that it is only necessary for these institutions to be abolished for anarchy to be realised. This view point and its consequences is perhaps the fundamental one in anarchist theory and many well-known arguments depend upon it; for example the following: politics is the science of government; government is the art of dividing men; and since men are instinctively united political activity is wrong.

On the other hand anarchism urges what at first seems a totally opposite doctrine. Here it appears that men are predominantly individuals; society is an aggregation of them who have chosen that particular way of living. All value proceeds from the individual; only he can know what is true or good for him. Government is wrong because it is narrow; it binds all men within one shackle. Decentralised living is necessary because no other social framework allows scope for individual development. Freedom means responsibility; unlimited delegation means slavery. Since the personality is ultimate, violence is evil. Round this body of argument stand the anarcho-pacifists, the Tolstoyans, a litter of cults and communities.

It is obvious that in many ways these two lines of thought are complementary. Freedom, for instance, is not an absolute and its relative values are represented neatly by either side. The first argument insists on freedom *from* coercion, the second on freedom *for* development. This does not mean that the dichotomy is merely a matter of negative and positive; it could be maintained very plausibly that the driving power of the anarchist movement has always come along the first avenue rather than the second. Our paradox cannot be resolved so easily, unless one likes to reinforce a weak step in the one chain of reasoning with an equally faulty link from the other.

Now just because anarchism offers this double front to the world, it is in a uniquely valuable social position. For the paradox within anarchism reflects the paradox within society at large. Everywhere men are divided by the opposition of individual and group, often in the form of 'democracy' *versus* 'fascism', frequently and even more falsely by the claims of 'private enterprise' *versus* 'state planning'. The labels are misapplied but the attitudes are real. Far from being orientated to some remote Utopian future, anarchism is well rooted in its time; it differs from the prevailing political attitudes in being intimately aware of the problem; because it is self-conscious it is able to attain a viewpoint comprehending both the individual and the social predicaments.

The fact that the two sides of the equation do exist outside the anarchist movement is sufficient demonstration that both are valid. Not merely valid for different groups of people: the woman enjoying the news-reel on Hamburg is the same woman weeping in the Anderson shelter Within the personality itself the anarchist discovers the synthesis of the contradictory elements in this—to use that clipped ticket of a word—universal dialectic.

SOCIAL MAN

Every man is made up of hundreds of selves. Further, his life in time is made up of innumerable instants, each self-contained and linked

only by memory or objective historical records. Finally there are the unlimited potential personalities which are never realised except in the fantasy life of each individual. It is possible, however, to bring order into this chaos by dividing the personality into its social and individual aspects: social, the objectively apprehended, acting, event-determined aspect, usually motivated by a distinct group of 'social' drives; and individual, the subjectively apprehended, experiencing, free-willing aspect, motivated mainly by what Freud once defined as the 'ego-instincts'. Life forces this distinction upon us and since we are all aware of it it is unnecessary to spin out these platitudes any further.

The social man within us is imitative, gregarious, dependent. Because he exists the future of the group is assured. He is plastic; almost any set of truths, any system of beliefs and actions, any code of morals, is acceptable to him. It is merely necessary for society to offer certain channels for feeling, prohibit others, for him to change his shape and conform to that society. All day long as we move from group to group the social man within us is assuming and discarding mask after mask; when we meet others he behaves not as we want to behave but as he thinks they expect us to behave; social man is never seen completely by another person but only by a number of persons whose total impressions would be needed to describe him. A society is made up of social men, that is why a group is different from a collection of individuals. The Hitlers and the Churchills are in error only when they say that the group is greater than the men who compose it.

Unfortunately social man has a far narrower scope for feeling than individual man. He conforms to the lowest common denominator of his herd. Consequently, the smaller the group, the more intense and varied its life. The larger the group, the more crude and unstable its emotion; because socially men are members of one another they are capable of the most terrible violations of individuality, the most irrational of beliefs. Between social men there exists that 'participatione mystique' which Levy-Bruhl speaks of in connection with the primitives; around them move vast economic, political, climatic and geographical forces which determine their destinies.

Social man has his own time. He lives in an objective space and the duration between the objects gives him a time-scale graded into past, present and future. The present is immediate; the past is recorded and since it protrudes into the present, is also immediate. The future is in a continual process of becoming from the present; like the past, one can see it emerging through change. Most societies have subdivided time further, measuring by recurrent events like the seasons and the physical routines of living. To-day social man has the clock which cuts his life into fragments as some of his other inventions do the animals.

A peculiar terror lies in wait for social man. As he becomes more social, in other words as society becomes more complex, his need to react is extended to a greater area of possible situations. His plasticity is stretched to its limits. Consequently, while his behaviour in fact becomes more formalised, abbreviated, artificial, he is laid open to a constant feeling of over-stimulation and anxiety. Socially, this means that his specialised abilities

and emotions are broken down, liquidated into a collective morass of crude love and hate. Intensified leader-worship and war become possible. Again, as time is split up into smaller and smaller fragments it seems to move faster. Standing in his contracted present, social man sees his time rushing through from future to past at an apparently greater speed. His fear of death becomes a fear of time. He can only hide from his fear by an increased social activity, a worship of the group which seems to live for ever.

Behind every social man, peering through the mask, is his companion, individual man. Insofar as individual man lives objectively, he also is laid open to the terrors just described. In a society so complex that it cannot be assimilated, in a time moving so rapidly that it cannot be experienced, individual man feels lost, helpless; he wants to escape. By escaping into society he can enjoy social man's compensations, but in doing so he necessarily sacrifices his individuality. However, there is no need for him to live so objectively; he has his own world and his own time. But just as he can lose himself in society, so social man can retreat into individuality. If it were not for certain considerations which will be put forward in a moment, one might even say that as society becomes more totalitarian, so the movement towards individuality becomes more certain.

Social man can, of course, alter his society. That is to say, groups within a society can impose their will upon the whole mass. Naturally these groups have first to be differentiated from the society. Within the objective limits change is possible, but since these limits are social the single social man can only view them from the collective standpoint. Like the society he is blind. Only individual man can apprehend a change in society, just as only by the yardstick of social man can individual man be measured. Obviously the chief differentiating factor in a group, greater than the impersonal factors already mentioned, is the pressure from individual man.

INDIVIDUAL MAN

Now what is this individual, that part of a man from which the anarchist derives half of his theory; in defence of whom politicians can persuade millions to crowd this way and that way, move the right leg, the left leg, twist such a bayonet, pull such a trigger, in a collective dance of death?

The usual answer is in terms of uniqueness. What is individual about a man, the story runs, is his particular pattern of behaviour, his distinct biological inheritance, his unique set of experiences. But it is obvious that this mechanical conception of individuality is not very satisfactory. Every mass-produced machine has a slightly different action, slightly different materials, a very different past, from its fellows, but that does not make it an individual. The acceptance of this fairy-tale actually facilitates the destruction of uniqueness; in every shop-window, to take a ubiquitous example, one sees an array of 'different', 'personal', 'individual' goods offered by the manufacturers to the herd of last season's automatons in the street. Uniqueness differentiates social men: it does not define individual man.

Suppose we consider a man walking home alone after work. He is thinking about himself. Perhaps he reviews the day's activity, perhaps he plans out to-morrow. He visualises himself performing this action or that,

he talks to himself. But if we look closely at these mental gestures, listen to his inner voice, we discover that he uses precisely those behaviour patterns which he has used throughout his social past. He is on a mental stage before a mental audience which sometimes approves, sometimes condemns—an aspect of his conscience. Society, in other words, has invaded his personality and set up its own form of government, its own cultural background. Society lives inside men as well as outside. Even the protesting conscientious objector, even the man throwing the bomb from his tremendous loneliness and despair, merely makes real a social potentiality. If one delves further into the personality, into its 'past', one seems to discover only a succession of forgotten selves, a history of societies. And finally nothing is left but the awareness of oneself, self-consciousness like a point of light moving across the dusty mirrors of different times, places, possible worlds.

Self-consciousness then, the indivisible, is the individual. But the light produces a reflection from the mirror; self-consciousness can invest with individuality the things to which it is attached. The sum of these things, an inner body of memories and attitudes which though continually changing (in response to factors, conscious, unconscious, phylogenetic, which are really objective factors) yet preserves an homogenous and unique identity: this inner body is the personality. It bridges the two poles of individual and social man. Magnetised by the pole of individuality, it enables us to speak of "my" will and desire, or extending the principle into objectivity, of "my" clothes and house. Social factors determine the limits to this appropriative process, but ideally the narcissism of the personality can be widened until it includes the whole universe. If self-consciousness has not kept pace with such a diffusion the personality is subject to social time and space, becomes in fact the undifferentiated social man. If it has done so however, if the widened personality is also individual, then the way is open to a pantheism of the most exalted kind: the universal awareness of the great artist; the complete freedom characterising a grasp of all experience; Nature aware of itself. Between these two theoretical extremes may be ranged the pervert, the miser, the criminal, the craftsman, the despot, the mystic—stages on the path to complete individuation.

But let us return to the individual, *via* the analogy of the mirrors. Relative to the eye of light, the 'I' of individuality, these are perpetually changing their position. They have no fixed residence in time. The eye does not see them as past or future any more than, when it looks out to the objective world, it experiences temporal categories except in terms of the present. It knows only a present present, a present past, and a present future. The past is not fixed; it can be known only through the present and consequently it changes just as the present changes. But this 'present' can only be established by reference to what is objective. The individual therefore, as distinct from the social man, is timeless, or since that word presupposes time, eternal.

The individual lives in eternity and attaches itself to one of two worlds. The first is the objective one; standing behind the many masks of social man it exerts through him an objective, social influence. To be more exact, it suffuses the desires of the personality with individuality; the person is

possessed by a self. Secondly, embracing thus the changing host of desires, tendencies, memories, it gives a fugitive reality to personality, illumines in a continually changing moment the subjective man.

One might say that the personality is a lighted channel through which pours a torrent of energy, the subjective into the objective, the unconscious into the conscious, the 'past' into the 'present'. The channel itself is changed and moulded by the forces working through it which, as we have seen, are ultimately objective and social. Only the light remains unchanged, the essential individual, eternal and absolute.

It is futile to question whether the individual or the social man is real or illusory, whether the 'mystical' or the 'materialist' side of anarchism is the true one. Social man and individual man have been artificially separated here for convenience, but in reality they meet in every person. Anarchism is founded on experience, this human reality. Let us return to our starting point and consider the practical relevance of this analysis, the building of a society which will represent the re-integrated man.

THE BIRTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Before doing so however, it might be as well to pause over another aspect of the link between social and individual man. This is the birth of the individual from society and from his environment. Inevitably this survey must be from a social standpoint.

In western societies birth is seen as a purely physical phenomenon; pregnancy is followed by a few hours' labour and the individual is born. Other civilisations, with a firmer grasp on reality, show by their initiation ceremonies at puberty and later at least an intuitive awareness that this is a fallacy. It follows from the preceding analysis that birth is not consummated at parturition; this is merely the first stage of birth, the emergence of the physical self. The baby does not become self-conscious immediately; even its ability to respond to language does not develop until the second or third month. It does not learn the meaning of the word 'I' until it is two or three years old. For a long time after this the child will be emotionally involved with its parents, its family, its school and street groups, passing through and detaching itself from wider and wider areas of feeling, until at puberty, with its full realisation of separateness, the individual is born. Individuation, or the penetration of the personality and its environment by the individual, self-love to group-love, continues throughout life. In this long birth-process many accidents may occur; just as a delayed delivery demands a doctor, so a neurotic fixation or regression demands a psychologist.

In the womb, we are told, the foetus 'recapitulates' the prehistory of mankind. Similarly the birth of an individual man is analogous to the emergence of individuality from society.

THE INDIVIDUAL IN HISTORY

It is possible that the member of a primitive tribe is related to it in much the same way as the child is to its mother. He is not an individual: he is merely a function of his group. Kropotkin remarks in *Mutual Aid* that

> " . . . primitive man has one quality, elaborated and maintained by the very necessities of his hard struggle for life—he identifies his own existence with that of his tribe . . . Primitive folk . . . so much identify their lives with that of the

tribe, that each of their acts, however insignificant, is considered as a tribal affair."

Individuality is a comparatively late product of historical processes, and myths, folk tales, psychological and anthropological research all indicate not only that this is so, but that there is a strong urge towards a retreat into the collective, an opposition to individual development. Men have always been eager to sacrifice themselves to what is larger than the self. The most obvious example is that of religion, in which Original Sin may well represent the self-will of individuality, Original Innocence the necessary amorality of social man, and Divine Grace the return to collective approval following the sacrifice of the self. Modern political religions demonstrate the same pattern; unfortunately their Kingdom of Heaven exists on earth. It seems that there is a continual struggle in history between the man and the mass, between solitude with its terror and society with its law, a pendulum swing from death to death.

The latest victory for the individual occurred at the Renaissance. Burckhardt says:

> "In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness—that which was turned within as that which was turned without—lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation —only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air; an objective treatment and consideration of the State and of all the things of this world became possible. The subjective side at the same time asserted itself with corresponding emphasis; man became a spiritual *individual*, and recognised himself as such."

To-day the State is rapidly returning to its original identification with The People; the more self-conscious members of the population are becoming outlaws. The class-struggle which has always been a disguise for the individual-*versus*-society struggle is returning to the real grounds for conflict. It is possible, however, that individuality is now so well established that it will not be defeated; it is encouraging that totalitarian societies should have to coerce and bribe large minorities into acquiescence. Even in these societies the moments of actual social immersion—the frenzied political meeting, the pogrom, the emotional background of killing—are still comparatively brief.

CONCLUSIONS

Every man is a double man. The problem of how to live a balanced life is always the problem of how to balance the two sides of one's personality. Some communities facilitate this balance. On the one hand they offer social man the satisfactions proper to him; on the other they permit individual man freedom to suffuse his personality with value and to influence, through this social medium, other individuals. In such a community everyone belongs to the group but is not subordinated to it. There are no outlaws. There are no classes. Art becomes at once a social and an individual product.

At the moment we live not in a community but in a society. Social man is bribed into betraying his brother; Cain everlastingly murders Abel. The mechanisms of bribery are several: they are economic, political, and psychological. These forces sustain an internal conflict which produces neurosis in the personality and dissension in the society. But as we have seen, these forces are not external, they are not imposed upon us. We

create them and keep them in being. It is true that individual man is imprisoned; to-day he lives in a claustrophobic nightmare. But we are not only individuals. We are also society.

It follows that a double revolution is necessary; a revolution within and a revolution without. There is no inevitable Millenium beyond these barricades; if they are one-sided they have just one side; no beyond. Nor is it enough to destroy the present in the hope of realising a past Golden Age of primitive communism. Man to-day is not primitive. Man has changed. Now he demands two lives, two liberties, two scarcities, two securities, two thirsts, two satisfactions, two hungers, two loaves of bread.

We have to reintegrate ourselves and our society. It is our world which moves to destruction all around us, a schizophrenic world, terrible and insane. Because most men are mad they survive between the exploding air and the barren earth; between the stone in the hand and the glaze in the eye; the space in the belly, the fish in the sea. But none of us are really primitive any longer. We have changed. Perhaps it will be to-day that we change some more.

D. S. Savage

The Status of Proletarian Poetry

To reopen, at this date, the well-worn question of "proletarian" writing may seem to some readers as ill-directed an activity as stabbing a dead fascist. The "proletarian" cry is inseverably associated in our minds with the defunct literary atmosphere of the 'thirties, a literary epoch which can surely never return. But I am by no means convinced that the issue is one which can be assumed to be safely dead and buried. Surface manifestations may wither and die, but the fundamental inner attitude to life and art which is capable of producing and proclaiming those manifestations is not so easily got rid of. The danger for the future is not that of a full-dress revival of the nineteen-thirties, but of a more sinister and pervasive attempt to shackle art and the artist to some exterior obedience.

Is there such a *genre* as "proletarian poetry"? Undoubtedly there is a kind of verse still being written and published which is presented as such. The curious feature of this verse is that it has no real connection with the life of the folk, and must be distinguished absolutely from popular ballads and songs which are genuinely nourished by, and in turn express, the life of the people. "Proletarian" poetry, or as it is sometimes called latterly—not without diplomatic modification—"social" poetry, is verse produced by quite sophisticated and not at all necessarily working-class individuals who, however, by a faulty mental process are led in a peculiar way to confuse the values of art with the supposed requirements of social ends which have nothing whatever to do with art. Specimens of this kind of writing, and

of the attitude which confused aesthetic with political values, were to be found in this country just before the war in a periodical called *Poetry and the People*. The change in the political situation which put "revolutionary" politics out of court for the duration of the war, seems to have resulted in the decease of this publication, and so far it does not appear that the attitude to art which it expressed has found in England any consistent further outlet. The case is otherwise in America, where the shift of the left wing parties from domestic to foreign enmities has resulted in the switch-over of "proletarian" poets to "anti-fascist" patriotic nationalism. Further change-overs may be expected in the future, and who is optimistic enough to predict that the English scene will be free of the underlying confusion which is at present revealed in a glaring form in certain manufactories of American poetry and criticism?

The following paragraph, which is taken from the "News Notes" of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, a reputable American poetry journal, for December 1942, will serve to indicate certain features of the (now nationalized) "proletarian" poetry and its intentions.

> "An anthology to be known as *War Poems of the United Nations* is being prepared by the League of American Writers. It will be edited by Joy Davidman and published by the Dial Press. An invitation is issued to all American poets "to contribute such of their work as they believe useful to the war effort." It is the League's intention to include poetry representing all of the United Nations, the countries which are invaded but not conquered—the Jugoslav guerrillas, the French underground, the peoples of Latin-America, and the Italian, German and Spanish anti-Fascist writers. The only limitation in subject is that all poems must make their contribution to defeating the Axis—whether by attacking Fascism and its horrors, celebrating individual deeds of heroism, building morale and the spirit of resistance, crying for action, fighting racial discrimination, or by any of the hundred other methods of aiding the war effort . . . "

The editorial staff of *Poetry* cannot, of course, be held responsible for any kind of attempted perversion of poetry which is reported in their news column. But an alarming indication of the absence of critical defence against this sort of prostituting (for it is no less) of the poet's function, is provided in a more recent issue of *Poetry* (for August 1944), by a certain Mr. E. S. Forgotson who is there reviewing a book called *Seven Poets in Search of an Answer*. The review in question may seem a disproportionately small peg upon which to hang even a moderately elaborate critical article, but the fact that such a piece of facing-both-ways, however intrinsically unimportant, can get itself printed in a respectable periodical in this decade cannot, apart from the significance of the volume of verse which occasioned it, be without meaning.

"All of the poetry in this symposium," writes Mr. Forgotson, "which includes Maxwell Bodenheim, Joy Davidman, Langston Hughes, Aaron Kramer, Alfred Kreymborg, Martha Millet and Norman Rosten, has as its basic attitude anger against fascism and fascistic behaviour." "Proletarian poetry," he continues, "is the voice of one who is angry, who counter-attacks, and who seeks to arouse and direct the counter-attack of others. Mr. Shemas O'Sheel, who introduces the *Seven Poets*, praises Maxwell Bodenheim because 'his verse crashes forward with the tread of an angry man,' and he calls for a poetry 'that will set more feet marching against fascism, upset the plots of traitors and force the timid hands of statesmen . . . books of high

poetry; ballads celebrating our heroes and our cause; doggerel to take the hide off Hitlerites'." Such is the outlook of the "proletarian" or "social" poet: the question is, what is the status of this kind of verse as compared with that which is non-proletarian or non-social?

It is reasonable to ask this question, for it appears that Mr. Forgotson, in his review, has some difficulty over it. It appears from his remarks that he is aware of certain unfriendly critics who do not like poetry to be "proletarian." "These critics have for a long time conveyed to us at least the impression that they found such poetry not very satisfying. They compared it with the work of other poets of our time and past times, with unhappy results for the proletarians, and in some instances hinted that the general condition of culture would be improved if the proletarian poets kept their inkwells shut." Mr. Forgotson admits, nevertheless, that "proletarian" poetry tends to be "thin" and "shallow," and this he attributes to its connection with its determining undercurrent of anger. ". . . It may be," he concurs, "that great anger, though just, operates toward the simplification, even towards the distortion of experience." Nevertheless, "In our time, when evil political pressures are so heavy and immediate, and so dangerous, a 'narrow' poetry of this kind has an understandable origin. It is the poetry of the imperilled, whose view may be narrow and simple out of the necessary intensity of their emotions. It is also poetry *for* the imperilled, and valuable for the same reason: it may operate to focus the attention of its audience undividedly on what must be destroyed, without any emotional slackening through full analysis, which, however true and profound, may at a crucial stage be impractical in terms of action." The result of Mr. Forgotson's deliberations is the conclusion that two separate *kinds* of poetry, proletarian and non-proletarian, exist, but that there is no reason why they should not lie down peacably together. "I see no reason why we must make an either-or choice; I doubt that there is an inevitable dilemma between social poetry and other poetry, although some critics have a motive which will not let them rest easy until they have constructed one. We do not scorn an apple because it is not a grape: this attitude will serve to orchestrate the virtues of all kinds of poetry if one can acquire it. From different minds at a given time, or from the same minds at different times, we will have many sorts and conditions of literature. We need not admire it all helter-skelter to hold that there are many ways of skinning a cat and many cats to skin."

It is perhaps because I am to be numbered among the disapproving critics viewed by Mr. Forgotson with a certain amount of distaste that I find not only the kind of verse which he so accommodatingly makes room for, but the kind of critical, or rather non-critical attitude which he advocates, disturbing. What I propose to do here, then, is briefly to investigate the assumptions which underly such an attitude towards "proletarian", and other, poetry.

To begin with, it is necessary to ask, can there conceivably be such a branch of poetry existing in a category quite separate from that of poetry in general? It is true that we call some poems, because of the peculiar limitations of their fields of reference, "nature" poems, or "religious" poems, "love" poems or "war" poems. But in none of these cases do we completely

separate all such poems from the common body of poetry and refuse to apply to them the standards which we apply to every other branch. Certainly, inasmuch as the adjective "proletarian" is restricted to the function of describing the subject-matter or field of reference of any given poem, we can admit the equal validity of "proletarian" poetry with that of any other such kinds—"nature" poetry, "war" poetry, "love" poetry or what you will —and can proceed to apply to it the identical aesthetic tests which we apply to them. Judged by these standards, a "proletarian" poem is either a good poem, *qua* poem, or it is a bad one. And there the matter ends. It is evident, however, that something quite other than this is implicitly claimed for "proletarian" poetry, something which has very little at all to do with aesthetics.

Mr. Forgotson defines proletarian poetry as poetry which is motivated by anger. No doubt it is so motivated, but it has further characteristics which are more revealing of its true nature and significance. Its origin is rather less important than its *intention.* It is poetry with a purpose, actually, *functional* verse. It will be noted that, according to Mr. Forgotson's account, Mr. Shaemas O'Sheel, who introduces the *Seven Poets,* does not call for more genuine poems that will be more complete, satisfying and pleasurable in themselves. That is quite irrelevant to his requirements. He calls, not for a poetry which will *be* something, i.e., poetry, but for a poetry which will *do* something: namely "set more feet marching against fascism, upset the plots of traitors and force the timid hands of statesmen." The question that immediately arises is, why should *poetry* be required to do these things? And indeed it would seem logical that if literary individuals can set more feet marching—since that is the intention—by other than literary means, they would be better employed on those means. Would these "proletarian" poets and their sponsors agree with that? Probably they would: indeed, the conclusion is hardly avoidable. But if that is so, does it not follow also that if that desirable end can be the more efficiently attained by the writing of *bad* verse, then bad verse is the kind of verse which should be written? The only escape from this conclusion is to pronounce that such a standard of good and bad is inapplicable: that good verse *is* that which sets the most feet marching, and bad verse that which fails to do so. A position that renders the critic's position comically superfluous.

It is clear to me, and it surely must be clear to anybody who professes any concern with the dignity of poetry, that no "kind" of poetry can be recognized which is not subject to criticism by aesthetic standards. If such writing claims to be poetry, then it must be judged as poetry. This attitude would naturally reveal most "proletarian" poetry to be beneath contempt; thin, tedious stuff, if not, unfortunately, always short, then usually nasty and brutish. If it is *not* presented as poetry, but as advertisement or propaganda, then we know at once where we are. We then have, not, on the one hand, "social" poetry and on the other, poetry in general, but simply poetry and non-poetry. And that is, actually, the position: at any rate with respect to the kind of writing presented in the volume reviewed by Mr. Forgotson, if this, his only example is, as I have little doubt it is, a representative specimen:

> But kill the thieves;

pile up the bodies of the murderers;
beat no retreat from the interminable battlefield;
suffer the spitting and the leather belts, but live;
wash your hands in pain, but live, but live.*

The false catholicity of the attitude of this particular American reviewer really disguises a cowardly reluctance to make firm critical discriminations. There is no limit to which such a toleration can be stretched. How, for example, is such a reviewer, if he fails to apply to verse of that type the standards which he normally expects to apply to non-functional poetry, to make critical comparisons between one book of "proletarian" or "anti-fascist" verse and another? Not to be able to make such a comparison puts him in the strictly useless position of being obliged to accept indiscriminately everything that is presented to him bearing a certain political label. To reverse the situation: if a critical evaluation *is* permitted to be made as between one such book of "proletarian" verse and another, it follows that the same method of evaluation must be applied as between a volume of "proletarian" verse and a volume of mere poetry. It is very significant that in performing his balancing feat of sitting on the fence between the two supposed *genres* of poetry, this reviewer is so preoccupied with defining his tolerant attitude to both "kinds" of poetry that he quite forgets to deliver any critical verdict on the particular book in question, *Seven Poets in Search of an Answer,* and at the end of his review the reader still doesn't know whether, in his opinion, the book is worth reading or not.

All this is much like cracking walnuts with a hydraulic hammer: a wasteful and ridiculous occupation. So-called "proletarian poetry", it is obvious, is merely propaganda verse, having nothing essential in common with poetry. For it is of the essence of genuine poetry that it is *not* functional: its aim is not to *do* but to *be*. Functional verse is disintegral, it can never have inward, organic form, because it points always to some end which is quite exterior to its own structure. Yet it is precisely the quality of integrality, its state of being a true entity, with its own centre of gravity, which distinguishes the true work of art from the false. And a poem which does not itself achieve this kind of organic wholeness, internal equilibrium, can only be the product of a writer who has not himself managed to organize his perceptions, emotions and ideas into an integral pattern. That is to say, a non-poem is the product of a non-poet. The so-called "proletarian" or anti-fascist writers are pseudo-poets who, unable to accomplish the integral gestures of poetry, yet unwilling to surrender the prestige of the poetic mantle, project their internal disorder on to their unfortunate readers. Because their poetry will not justify itself, it has to be justified by being referred to something completely external which has nothing whatever to do with art or the values of art. But no such justification is possible.

This functional view of poetry is one which would debase it to the level at which it becomes an ephemeral attachment to certain transient social situations. There is a fine unconscious irony in Mr. Forgotson's statement that—"What was formerly proletarian poetry has become anti-fascist poetry, just as what was formerly overt revolutionary Marxism has become the anti-

*The implications for morality of such effusions can't be gone into here, but they undoubtedly have some relationship with the general "proletarian" theory of poetry's function.

fascism of the alliance of classes and of national liberation." When the political situation changes, the functional, propaganda verse that has been written to accord with a previous social situation, becomes useless: never having had worth as poetry, it now loses worth even as propaganda: the natural end of all advertisement. The irony is maintained when Mr. Forgotson goes on to say, at the conclusion of his review—"Poetry of this sort, then, has, in the period of its natural appearance, a genuine social function and value—it may even be called indispensable for a total war." It would be difficult to find a more reprehensible example of clerical treason than that blithe statement, were it not so patently unintentional. If such "poetry" is "indispensable for a total war", that is, for a totalitarian society at war, we may be sure that it will be no less "indispensable" for a totalitarian society when it is not at war. Such verse is in fact totalitarian verse—it is the functional art of the totalitarian State, and its significance can be understood only in the light of the present universal trend towards totalitarianism. The cry for "ballads celebrating our heroes and our cause; doggerel to take the hide off Hitlerites" happens to come from an enthusiastic American Marxist turned chauvinist. It might equally well, with slight alterations, have come from a German or Russian, Hitlerite or Stalinite, literary bureaucrat.

To conclude, I would like to establish a connection on the one hand between this disintegral "social" poetry (which, as I have said, is verse which has its end exterior to its own structure, and which results from an illegitimate confusion between art and "politics" or "action") and a view of life which destroys the integrality of the individual person and makes him subsidiary to the social or historical processes; and on the other hand, between true, integral *personal* poetry, which is centred structurally within itself, and the view of life which gives absolute significance to the individual personality and relates history and politics to that centre.

Whatever the particular outward form assumed by totalitarianism, its inward nature is invariable: it is in essence a denial and destruction of the integrity and worth of the individual personality. To carry this denial into the realm of art is necessarily to destroy likewise the integrality of the art-products of that personality. An equivocal attitude on this issue is not possible for the serious and responsible critic. When the totalitarian philosophy of being creeps into poetic theory and practice his clear duty is to show it the door, not at all for political, but for strictly *aesthetic* reasons.

M. L. Berneri

Sexuality and Freedom

"The problem of sexuality permeates by its very nature every field of scientific investigation". This is too often ignored by revolutionaries who are willing to discuss Marx's economic doctrines or Kropotkin's sociological theories, but who regard with the greatest suspicion the work of psychoanalysts. Yet the existence of mass neuroses is only too obvious to-day. It is glaringly displayed in the cult of leadership which has taken an acute form in the totalitarian states, but which is equally evident in so-called democratic countries. It has given rise to outbursts of public sadism, in the glamourised versions of Hollywood producers or, in their crudest form, at Buchenwald and Belsen. It appears more obviously in the numerous cases of war neurosis, sadism, impotence and frigidity.

To reduce these problems to a question of family allowances, maternity benefits or old age pensions is ridiculous; to resolve it in terms of insurrection, of overthrow of the ruling class and the power of the State, is not enough. Human nature is a whole. The worker is not merely the producer in the factory or the field; he is also the lover, the father. The problems which he faces in his home are no less important than those at his place of work. By trying to separate biological and psychological problems from the sociological ones, we not only mutilate our theories, but are bound to reach false conclusions.

Very few scientists claim to be interested in science for its own sake. Almost all of them want to put their knowledge at the service of mankind. But the specialisation of their knowledge has made this task extremely difficult, one could almost say impossible. They have reached conclusions which, instead of helping man to reach a happier life, have taken him along the wrong path. The more involved and artificial the system, the more harmful it has been. When scientists merely encouraged men to follow their instincts, the effect might not have been very deep, but it was in the right direction. But when elaborate systems of organisation were suggested, the harm done by them was great, as they orientated man towards an artificial way of life completely divorced from his own nature.

The value of Wilhelm Reich's writings is that he is "a socially conscious scientist", and it is as a socially conscious scientist that he is of particular interest to us. His work on psychotherapy, on biology and physiology are too specialised to be considered here. We are unable to judge how successful his clinical method has been, or the value of his experiments in orgonetherapy and cancer research. These are subjects for doctors and psychoanalysts to discuss, but we believe that the less specialised part of Dr. Reich's writings deserve to be studied by anyone who is dissatisfied with the present system of society and wishes to see a free and happy world. Unfortunately,

there is only one book of his available in this country, *The Function of the Orgasm*,* and it is from this book that we attempt to give a summary of Dr. Reich's theories.

As a whole, Dr. Reich's work has been ignored by Left-wing and revolutionary movements. It has been left to the forces of reaction, both on the right and on the left, to recognise in him an enemy of authoritarian society. A violent newspaper campaign which lasted about ten months was carried out against Dr. Reich in Norway in 1938. He emigrated to America, but even there he was not free from police persecution. On the 12th December, 1941, at 2 o'clock in the morning, he was taken out of his bed by agents of the F.B.I. (equivalent of Scotland Yard) and taken to Ellis Island. Not until the 5th January was he released unconditionally. His publications have been banned by the Communists as well as by the Fascists, by the Socialists as well as by the Liberals. The explanation for this unpopularity is that Dr. Reich has attacked dictatorship under whatever name it disguised itself. In the October, 1944, issue of the *International Journal of Sex Economy* he reasserts his belief that "Even after the military victory over German fascism, the fascist human structure will continue to exist in Germany, Russia, America and everywhere else".

Though Dr. Reich has been described as a Marxist, he declares, as Marx did before him, "I am not a Marxist", and indeed he bitterly attacks the followers of Marx who have distorted the thought and the scientific discoveries of their master. Reich can be called a Marxist in as much as he adheres to the laws of economics formulated by Marx (in that sense, as Malatesta said, "We anarchists are all Marxists"), but his conception of the State is nearer that of Bakunin than that of Marx. In the article quoted above he declares:

> "*State and Society mean two basically different social facts.* There is a state which is above or against Society as best exemplified in the fascist totalitarian state. There is society without a state, as in the primitive democratic societies. There are state organisations which work essentially in the direction of social interests, and there are others which do not. What has to be remembered is that 'state' does not mean 'society'. In the course of 20 years, I have not heard one Soviet economist mention this fact. According to Marxian principles, there is, in the Soviet Union, no socialism, that is, *no abolition of market economy;* there is *state* capitalism, that is, capitalism without individual capitalists." §

Dr. Reich's understanding of the economic structure of society prevented mouth. What he does not say is that Marx advocated a workers' state as a transitional stage and did not realise that it would give rise to a new privileged class which would use *market economy* for its own ends. However, in the work-democracy advocated by Dr. Reich the state would not exist ("The 'well-ordered legal state' is an illusion, not a reality"), goods would be produced for needs and not for profit, each individual would be responsible for his own existence and social function.

Dr. Reich's understanding of the economc structure of society prevented him from falling into the errors of most psycho-analysts, who have seen in the Soviet Union or in planned authoritarianism the hope of a free and

The Function of the Orgasm, by Wilhelm Reich, M.D. Orgone Institute Press. New York, 1942.

§ Individual capitalism also exists on a small scale, and is admitted in a Communist pamphlet entitled *Soviet Millionaires*.

happy society. Reich realised the need to introduce "psychological methods into sociological thinking". Marx had concerned himself with the problem of work in relation to man, Freud with the rôle sexuality played in the conscious and unconscious of man. Reich tried to solve the conflict between these two scientific systems, or perhaps it is better to say that he tried to find a point of contact between them. In the article already quoted he explains this in the following way:

> "The two basic biological functions of the living, then, *'work'* on the one hand, *'sexuality'* or *'pleasure function'* on the other, were treated apart from each other, in two separate scientific systems, Marx's sociology on the one hand, and Freud's psychology on the other. In Marx's system, the sexual process led a Cinderella existence under the misnomer, 'development of the family'. The work process, on the other hand, suffered the same fate in Freud's phychology under such misnomers as 'sublimation', 'hunger instinct', or 'ego instinct'. Far from being antithetical, the two scientific systems, their originators being altogether unaware of it, met in the *biological energy of all living organisms* which, according to our functional method of thinking, expresses itself in *work* on the one hand and *sexuality* on the other."

This brings us back to the subject of the book we are considering, *The Function of the Orgasm.* For Reich the central phenomenon of sexuality is the *orgasm;* it "is the focal point of problems arising in the fields of psychology as well as physiology, biology and sociology." The title of the book is obviously chosen in defiance of those who think that sexuality is offensive and the book itself has been written, declares Dr. Reich, not without humour, at an age when he has not yet lost his illusions regarding the readiness of his fellows to accept revolutionary knowledge. Reich had before him the example of Freud who in later years watered down his theories on sexuality, so as to contradict his own earlier work. Reich has been expelled from the Association of the psycho-analysts and their publications have been barred to him, as he was accused of attaching too much importance to sexuality. He knows therefore how the pressure of hypocritical and moralistic society can bring scientists to change their views so as to make them palatable to the general public.

Reich adheres to the basic psycho-analytical concepts, but he refused to follow the psycho-analytic school when it relegated sexuality to a secondary rôle so as to gain approval even in reactionary quarters. Theodore P. Wolfe, who translated Dr. Reich's book from German into English, points out that:

> "Freud's original theory of sex was revolutionary and evoked the most violent reactions. The story of psycho-analysis is essentially the story of never ending attempts to allay these reactions on the part of a shocked world, and, to make psycho-analysis socially acceptable, sexuality had to be robbed of its real significance and to be replaced by something else. Thus, Jung replaced it by a religious philosophy, Adler by a moralistic one, Rank by the "Trauma of Birth," etc., etc."

In America, says Dr. Wolfe,

> ". . . we are witnessing the development of various 'sociological' schools of psycho-analysis. Theirs is, because it misleads so easily, a particularly dangerous argument. Whether explicit or buried in a great deal of academic or neologistic language, the argument is this: 'The important agent in the etiology of the neuroses is *not* sexuality, *but* social factors'. The appeal of such reasoning, because of the prevailing fear of sexuality and a general, though vague and confused realization of the importance of social factors, is enormous."

Dr. Reich, on the other hand, adheres to Freud's original etiological formula of the neurosis, *"the neurosis is the result of a conflict between*

instinctual demands and opposing social demands." In order to understand neuroses therefore one must study both sexuality and social forces.

"Dr. Reich," says Wolfe, "was the first to study not only the orgastic process itself but also the social conditions which influence this process in such a manner as to produce neuroses *en masse.*"

He gathered his material not merely in the drawing room of the psycho-analyst, but also in working class clinics, in mass meetings, by a daily contact with the people. His conclusions were bound to be different from those of psycho-analysts whose patients came from sheltered bourgeois families.

This does not mean that he found that neuroses are petit bourgeois ailments. On the contrary, the working class is as prone to neurosis as the more sheltered classes, and among it the neuroses take a violent and brutal aspect undisguised by intellectual niceties. From this vast clinical experience and from statistics which he obtained, Reich formed the conclusion that the vast majority of the population suffers from neurosis in a more or less attenuated form. All these neuroses are due *without exception* to a disturbance in the sex life of the man or woman. This became apparent to Reich, particularly in the case of men, only when he had strictly defined what healthy sexual life is. "Psychic health," he discovered, "depends upon *orgastic potency,* that is, on the capacity for surrender in the acme of sexual excitation in the natural sexual act."

Before Reich, psycho-analysts had considered men sexually healthy who could have sexual intercourse, and they could therefore claim that neurotics could have a normal sexual life. Reich by analysing in great detail the orgasm reflex found that no neurotic is able to be orgastically potent. He further established that the widespread existence of neurosis to-day is due to the sexual chaos brought about by a society based on authority. It is not found in human history before the development of the patriarchal social order, and it is still non-existent to-day in free societies, where:

"The vital energies, under natural conditions, regulate themselves spontaneously, without compulsive duty or compulsive morality. The latter are a sure indication of the existence of antisocial tendencies. Antisocial behaviour springs from *secondary drives which owe their existence to the suppression of natural sexuality.*

"The individual brought up in an atmosphere which negates life and sex acquires a *pleasure-anxiety* (fear of pleasurable excitation) which is represented physiologically in chronic muscular spasms. This pleasure anxiety is the soil on which the individual re-creates the life-negating ideologies which are the basis of dictatorship . . . The average character structure of human beings has changed in the direction of impotence and fear of living, so that authoritarian dictatorships can establish themselves by pointing to existing human attitudes, such as lack of responsibility and infantilism."

How have men succeeded in crushing their instincts for love and life? Are they biologically unable to experience pleasure and enjoy freedom? The causes, say Reich, are not biological, but economic and sociological. It is the compulsive family and compulsive morality which have destroyed the natural self-regulation of the vital forces. Malinowski's study of the sexual life of savages in the South Sea islands has shown that sexual repression is of sociological and not biological nature. It has further destroyed the Freudian concept of the biological nature of the Oedipus conflict, by showing that the child-parent relationship changes with the social structure of society. The Oedipus complex of the European does not exist among the Trobriand Islanders.

This is an all important point as, if sexual repression is biologically determined, it cannot be abolished, but if it is determined by social factors, then a change in those social factors will put an end to it. Malinowski observed that:

"Children in the Trobriand islands know no sex repression and no sexual secrecy. Their sex life is allowed to develop naturally, freely and unhampered *through every stage of life, with full satisfaction* . . . The society of the Trobrianders knew, in the third decade of our century, no sexual perversions, no functional psychoses, no psycho-neuroses, no sex murder; they have no word for theft; homosexuality and masturbation, to them, mean nothing but an unnatural and imperfect means of sexual gratification, a sign of a disturbed capacity to reach normal satisfaction . . . The Trobrianders, therefore, are spontaneously clean, orderly, social without compulsion, intelligent and industrious . . . At the time when Malinowski made his studies of the Trobriand islanders, there was living a few miles away, on the Amphlett Islands, a tribe with patriarchal authoritarian family organization. The people inhabiting these islands were already showing all the traits of the European neurotic, such as distrust, anxiety, neuroses, perversions, suicide, etc."

The conclusion from these observations is that, "The determining factor of the mental health of a population is the condition of its natural love life."

A further important fact arises out of Malinowski's studies. Among the Trobriand islanders there is one group of children who are not allowed sexual freedom because they are predestined for an economically advantageous marriage. These children are brought up in sexual abstinence and they show neuroses and a submissiveness which do not exist among the other children. From this Reich concludes,

"*Sexual suppression is an essential instrument in the production of economic enslavement.* Thus, sexual suppression in the infant and the adolescent is not, as psycho-analysis—in agreement with traditional and erroneous concepts of education—contends, the prerequisite of cultural development, sociality, diligence and cleanliness; *it is the exact opposite.*"

This is corroborated by the observations carried on by Reich on his own patients. When neurotic patients were restored to a healthy sex-life, their whole character altered, their submissiveness disappeared, they revolted against an absurd moral code, against the teachings of the Church, against the monotony and uselessness of their work. They refused to submit to a marriage without love which gave them no sexual satisfaction, they refused to carry on with work where they did not have to use their initiative and creative powers. They felt the need to assert their *natural rights* and to do so they felt that a *different kind of society* was needed.

"To the individual with a genital structure, sexuality is a pleasurable experience and nothing but that; work is joyous vital activity and achievement. To the morally structured individual, work is burdensome duty or only a means of making a living . . . *the therapeutic task consisted in changing the neurotic character into a genital character, and in replacing moral regulation by self regulation.*"

Dr. Reich shows in case reports how this was done. He had observed that "the essence of a neurosis is the *inability of the patient to obtain gratification*" (in the sense of orgastic potency defined before). Freud had declared before him in his earlier works *"the energy of anxiety is the energy of repressed sexuality"*, but the psycho-analysts thought that the disturbance of genitality was one symptom among others, while Reich established that it was *the* symptom of neurosis.

"*The energy source of the neurosis lies in the differential between accumulation*

and discharge of sexual energy. The neurotic psychic apparatus is distinguished from the healthy one by the constant presence of undischarged sexual energy.

"Freud's therapeutic formula is correct but incomplete. The first prerequisite of cure is, indeed, to make the repressed sexuality conscious. However, though this alone *may* effect the cure, it *need not* of necessity do so. It does so only if at the same time *the source of energy, the sexual stasis* (damming up of sexual energy), is eliminated; in other words, *only if the awareness of instinctual demands goes hand in hand with the capacity for full orgastic gratification.* In that case the pathological psychic growths are deprived of energy at the source."

In his description of the formation of actual neurosis (which he calls stasis neurosis) and psycho-neurosis, Reich begins by stating that sexual excitation is definitely a *somatic* process and that neurotic conflicts are of a *psychic* nature. A slight psychic conflict will produce a slight somatic stasis or damming up of sexual energy which in its turn will reinforce the conflict, which will reinforce the stasis. The original conflict is always in existence in the sexual child-parent conflict, and if this is nourished by the actual stasis it gives rise to neurosis and psycho-neurosis. But the actual stasis can be eliminated by positive sexual gratification, so that the original psychic conflict lacks energy to transform itself into a neurosis. The cycle between the psychic conflict and the somatic stasis must be interrupted, even if it is only by gratification through masturbation. For the patient to obtain sexual gratification, it is necessary to destroy his character-armour against his sexuality. Dr Reich has elaborated a technique of *character-analytic vegetotherapy.* Its fundamental principle is the restoring of bio-psychic motility by means of dissolving rigidities (armourings) of the character and musculature. The term 'rigidity' must be taken literally; it is by a contraction of his muscles, particularly around his sexual organs, by holding back his breath, that the neurotic builds himself an armour against sexual pleasurable excitation.

Considering the tremendous number of neuroses in existence to-day, it will be obvious that Dr. Reich does not believe that his vegetotherapy can be applied to all of them, but he has attached a particular importance to the development of the *prophylaxis of the neuroses.* His experience in sex hygiene clinics, the statistics gathered in mass meetings and youth groups, convinced him that the situation called for *"extensive social measures for the prevention of the neuroses".* His practical suggestions are very interesting, but it is impossible to discuss them here. Suffice to say that Dr. Reich wants to see the complete liberation of the child and adolescent sexuality from the oppression of the authoritarian family, of the church, of the school. He wants to see the adult freed from compulsive marriage and compulsive morality. He wants a return to instinctual life, to reason, which he qualifies by saying, *"That which is alive is in itself reasonable."*

This freedom of love, of work, of science can be obtained, he thinks, in a "work democracy, that is a democracy on the basis of a *natural* organisation of the work process." How this work democracy is to be attained and what shape it is going to take, are still left rather vague, but that it will be a free society there can be no doubt. *"Natural moral behaviour presupposes freedom of the natural sexual process".* And again :

"The social power exercised by the people . . . will not become manifest and effective until the working and producing masses of the people become psychically independent and capable of taking full responsibility for their social existence and capable of rationally determining their lives themselves."

Had Dr. Reich witnessed the formation of industrial and agricultural collectives in Spain during the revolution it is probable that his "work democracy" would have taken a more concrete shape. He also seems to consider the development of industry as a factor in the sexual emancipation of men. This as well is probably due to his lack of knowledge of agricultural countries such as Spain and Italy where neuroses seem to be far less numerous than in industrialised countries.

The only practical examples he gives of "genuine democratic endeavour" are the "labour management committees" in the U.S.A., where workers participate in the management of production and distribution. The example is unfortunate; it is true that the workers share the responsibility in the management, but they are not their own masters. The capitalist is always there and can dictate to them.

Dr. Reich does not look at the world through pink glasses. He sees all its corruption and misery, all its absurdity and ugliness, but he does not despair. He has confidence in that which is alive because he knows that man is only anti-social, submissive, cruel or masochistic because he lacked the freedom to develop his natural instincts.

The importance of Dr. Reich's theories is enormous. To the sophisticated, to the lover of psycho-analytic subtleties, his clarity, his common sense, his direct approach may appear too simple. To those who do not seek intellectual exercise, but means of saving mankind from the destruction it seems to be approaching, this book will be an individual source of help and encouragement. To anarchists the fundamental belief in human nature, in complete freedom from the authority of the family, the Church and the State will be familiar, but the scientific arguments put forward to back this belief will form an indispensible addition to their theoretical knowledge.

DEFINITIONS.

Orgasm reflex. The unitary involuntary contraction and expansion of the total organism in the acme of the sexual act. This reflex, because of its *involuntary* character and the prevailing pleasure anxiety, is suppressed in most humans to-day.

Orgastic impotence. The absence of orgastic potency. It is the most important characteristic of the average human of to-day, and—by damming up biological energy in the organism—provides the source of energy for all kinds of psychic and somatic symptoms.

Orgastic potency. Essentially, the capacity for complete surrender to the *involuntary* contractions of the organism and complete discharge of sexual excitation in the acme of the sexual act. It is always lacking in neurotic individuals. It presupposes the presence or establishment of the genital character, *i.e.* the absence of a pathological character armour and muscular armour. The concept is essentially unknown and usually not distinguished from erective potency and ejaculative potency, both of which are nothing but prerequisites of orgastic potency.

Stasis. The damming-up of sexual energy in the organism, thus the source of energy for the neuroses.

Stasis anxiety. The anxiety caused by the stasis of sexual energy in the centre of the organism when its peripheral orgastic discharge is inhibited. Same as Freud's 'actual anxiety'.

Stasis Neuroses. Originally the same as Freud's 'actual neuroses', the concept now includes all somatic disturbances which are the immediate result of the stasis of sexual energy.

Vegetotherapy. The sex-economic therapeutic technique. So called because the therapeutic goal is that of liberating the bound-up vegetative energies and thus restoring to the patient his vegetative motility.

(From *The Function of the Orgasm.* Obtainable from Freedom Press, 25s.)

Jean Rollin

French Literature Today

I have been asked to describe the literary scene in France to-day. It is a subject which would require much study and which has already been treated adequately and with all the necessary details in *Horizon*. I will therefore limit myself in this essay to the outlining of certain reflections which have occurred to me during two short visits to France.

I happened to be in Paris at the time of the national funeral of Paul Valéry. To one who could remember the chattering contempt which surrounded his name only five years ago, the event was somewhat astonishing. I remark on it, because it is not isolated. Apart from Aragon, who already before the war had a well-established following, names as little known as these of Eluard, Bataille, Sartre, Camus and others, are now on every tongue and adorn the lists of every review. Jean-Louis Barrault, who around about 1936 and 1938 gave us hope for the theatre, is now at the Comédie Française, and no-one thinks of questioning his great talent. Prévert, whose poems delighted the ironic tastes of a few, is in fashion. And one could quote still more names.

The avant-garde holds the stage. The avant-garde has acquired citizenship. That is the first point to be made. And it has some importance, because, with a few exceptions, the avant-garde holds the stage without having renounced its past; this, moreover, in a country where intellectual and social conformity have not disappeared—rather to the contrary. This is a fact which is not adequately explained by saying that the avant-garde holds the stage because it participated in the resistance. That is true, in many cases, but it is not a sufficient explanation. It would seem, rather, that we should speak of crystallisation, of precipitation. For what is important to remember is that the literary life of France offers nothing new. There is no breaking away, no revolt. There are crystallisation, affirmation, and the discovery by the people of what was already in existence. There is also transformation.

Far from being in a revolutionary period, we are in a period of transition. There is nothing that can be compared with what was produced after the other war. Neither Dada, nor surrealism. Little or no revolt. Little or no experiment. Little or no invention.

Like all other movements in French life, the present tendencies in literature are confused. There is no evident centre of attraction, and if literary production is relatively rich, it is not necessarily valuable. The tendencies that existed before the war have been transformed or weakened, and others are born whose strength and scope it is difficult to estimate. But it seems possible to perceive certain distinguishing features which give an

indication of the meaning of this evolution. They are as follows.

The profusion of poetry. No new school or technique in view. Predominant influence—surrealism, which, while being generally rejected, is 'present' in all poetry nowadays, as it rarely was before. Its influence is indirect. It is manifested not by surrealist productions, which are almost non-existent, but by the liberation which it has brought to poetic technique and which is now very visible. While most of those who formerly adhered to it now renounce it, surrealism, by means of dislocation and violence, has had a regenerative effect. Poetry nowadays is essentially a poetry of images. There are no discoveries, but a general affirmation and recognition by the public of names already known—Aragon, Eluard, Michaux. There is a tendency which is yet little noticed but which is becoming accentuated, probably owing to the profound influence of Valéry, towards a return to form and precision. There is a rebirth, probably of short duration and due to politics, of occasional poetry. Two catholic poets stand out, one already known, Patrice de la Tour de Pin, the other, Pierre Emmanuel. The political poets above all engage the attention of the public. Poetry, which before the war tended to become isolated and enclosed, has returned to earth. It tends nowadays towards expression and song. Under the occupation it was the voice of sorrow and the hope of the people. Now it is becoming almost official. This poetic rejuvenation which is so evident is a political rather than a literary phenomenon. There remains to be noted a metaphysical current in poetry, where former surrealists like René Char and Tristan Tzara appear with new poets like Francis Ponge and Atlan.

The Actuality of the Drama. This current, which existed already, has become accentuated. Greek tragedy is in fashion, not only in the theatre. The theatre itself shows a tendency to depart from the narrow limits of the salon or the bedroom, where it was formerly confined. The names of Sartre and Camus, also that of Jean Anouilh, dominate the stage. The moral aspect of the theatre, as against mere entertainment, becomes more evident.

These are the two factors which show the most striking departure from what already existed. It should be remarked that, except perhaps for the actuality of the drama, they are not of a very positive nature. As has already been said, we are in a period of transition, and politics, in its most diverse forms, occupies at the present time far too important a place in the minds of men for detachment, experiment or invention to manifest themselves in a fruitful or visible manner. Literature, which was forced into the service of events, still finds itself between the two pitfalls of journalism and propaganda. The books which are published have reference to events and they reflect or distort them more or less badly. Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasise a richness and complexity which could become fertile. Stirred by opposing currents, French literature of the present day has no centre or fixed point; it is developing in all directions, and this allows us to believe that it is seeking for a new road.

On the plane of ideas, if we except the more or less competent justifications of the various political doctrines, it is necessary to point out a current of thought which can be described by saying that it is preoccupied in the first place with all the problems which follow from the religious aspect of life. The Christian movement which finds its latest development on the

political plane, since in this way it tends to find an adequate reply to the many questions which the development of the modern world puts to Christianity, is not its least important manifestation. But I wish to speak above all about the intellectual trends of thought in which the writers and thinkers place themselves resolutely aside from the Marxist-Catholic or even Marxist-Democratic controversy, and take up again the problems which, in regarding man as the end or the means, lead them to explore again the regions thought to have been discovered once and for all, and to pose in new terms the questions which relate to the religious aspect of human life. This aspect of French literature is all the more interesting, because it seems in this way in advance of what can develop in England or America, and in many respects, although those who participate in this tendency refuse to allow themselves to be taken up with the "actual" aspects of the modern world, they put questions and carry a message which touch the depth and attack the source of the contemporary spiritual malady. I wish to speak of that group of writers, poets and essayists who, purely for the convenience of the term, we call the Existentialists, more to differentiate them from others than to define their own attitudes, since certain among them would no doubt deny this title.

It is a question of a group and not of a school, and this is only in so far as this group acts upon literature, for literature does not interest them as much as all that. I wish to say here that the writers who compose this group do not attack the technical problems of literature and art in the same way as did the surrealists or the dadaists. Their preoccupations are much more ethical than literary. Those who take part in this group are philosophers, but they have also established themselves as novelists, dramatists and essayists. In a certain sense one could call them active philosophers. Their plays and novels contain a message if not a teaching. They are also humanists in the full sense of the word, and they are for the most part atheists.

It is difficult in the limits of this study to show their ideas in a few lines. I will therefore content myself with explaining why they constitute a new phenomenon, in fact the only new phenomenon in contemporary French literature. In so far as they are novelists like Sartre or Camus, they are finding again what one might call the "moral" vein, which has been rich in the history of the French novel, but in finding it they are discovering new perspectives—since in nothing are they moralists and since the most distinct influence which has been exerted on them is that of the American novelists, Hemingway, Faulkner and Caldwell. While psychological analysis is the favourite technique of French novelists, these writers, in place of illuminating their characters from within, exteriorise them to the maximum and make them live through their own words rather than by explaining them. More than most other writers they seem to put into practice the formula of Gide, there are no beautiful sentiments in literature. But if they choose, as subjects for their work, conflicts which arouse sentiments usually considered as "forbidden", or if their heroes are in general "low" characters, they do not bring into their descriptions or their judgments any kind of complacency. In many ways one could call them clinical novelists, and this would give value to one of their main characteristics, lucidity. This

lucidity, proceeding from their philosophical conceptions, is put at the service of a desire for truth at all costs, which constitutes the basis of their moral attitudes. This is true above all of Sartre and Camus. Thus appear the elements of a doctrine which one could call active pessimism and which gives to the works of these writers an originality, so that while being the least contemporary in the current sense of the word, they give the tone of the French literature of the after-war period much more than those who describe with force "living" details and events in the service of a definite political idea.

Sartre and Camus are the two best known names of this group, to which are also attached the essayist Georges Bataille, the poet Frances Ponge, the novelist and essayist Blanchot, the young novelist Mouloudji, the "discovery" of the liberation, only to mention the leading names.

The limits of this article do not allow a deep study of the works and activities of these different writers. It is sufficient to say that these are the only discoverers who appear on the horizon. Their personalities are strong enough to engage the attention and to make one believe that, in penetrating and clearing ground, they will find what they are seeking. The others, all those who were already known before the war, and those who follow them, produce and continue to work as they had done already. Let us add that the researches to which the writers we have just mentioned devote themselves, the discoveries which they may make, are of such a nature that they put in question all that seemed to have been gained. They derive from Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Kafka, and they tend towards what one might call a desperate humanism. This will show to what extent we are in good company here, aside from both Marxism and Christianity, and away from those battered roads which the intellectual of to-day in all countries seems to be willing to follow, as if the replies which writers can give or the messages they can convey, should be made to serve the cause of a party or a dictrine, and not just simply man.

The attention still given in France to the problems, which, in order to be quite clear, it is necessary to call religious, shows French writers to be concerned with the real problems of the times, rather than with formulating slogans or talking politics in a void. This one cannot notice without pleasure, at a time when everything seems to conspire to stifle the voices and messages of sincerity.

Albert McCarthy

The Poetry of American Negro Folksong

(3) Blues

"Say, that old graveyard sure is a lonely place,
They put you in a hole 'n throw dirt on your face."

The third primary group of Negro Folksong, the blues, is both poetically and musically the most interesting, and along with *Cante hondo* represents the only genuine urban folk music in existence to-day.

Blues are intensely personal—essentially they portray the reactions of the individual to events in his or her life, although at times a more impersonal note may be recorded in the setting down of a social event. However, the predominance of the former type is apparent to even the most casual listener. It would appear from a study of the most primitive blues on record[1] that originally the structure was less formal than at present, and as the American critic Wilder Hobson suggests in his book, *American Jazz Music,* "the blues may originally have consisted merely in the singing, over a steady percussive rhythm, of lines of variable length, the beat being determined by what phrase the singer had in mind, with equally variable pauses (the accompanying rhythm continuing), determined by how long it took the singer to think up another phrase". Thus, with such a highly flexible musical medium the individual Negro sang of his life, for the entertainment of others or merely as a means of helping time to pass quickly when engaged in some irksome routine job.

The average blues verse consists of twelve bars of music in common time; it is a tradition that the three groups of four bars are on the common chord of the keynote, on the chord of the sub-dominant and on the chord of the dominant seventh respectively. A line of verse is sung to part of each phrase, the latter part of the phrase is given over to improvisational flourishes by the accompanists. The first line is normally repeated, and the third line rhymes with the preceding two. A typical example follows:

Had the blues before sunrise, tears standing in my eyes (repeat)
It's such a miserable feeling, a feeling I do despise.

Certain blues have a sixteen bar structure, but they are exceptions.

Blues appeared at the turn of the last century, but there is evidence to support the theory that they were sung around the time of the Emancipation. A prevailing misconception is that they are an offshoot of spirituals, but no serious student of Negro Folkstong gives credit to such a statement. There is far more likelihood in the suggestion that they embody elements

from both the secular and religious songs of the Negro, and that it was not long before the secular strains predominated. The greatest impetus to the development of the blues was provided by the birth of jazz late in the last century—the New Orleans musicians took blues up the Mississippi with them, and the diffusion has continued ever since. Blues had a significance among the New Orleans Negroes quite unique in the history of the form, and the late Jelly Roll Morton, one of the pioneers of jazz, once said in reference to some men whom he remembered from childhood :

> "They can take a 10c. Xmas Horn, take the wooden mouthpiece off, having only the metal for a mouthpiece, and play more blues with that instrument that any trumpeter I have ever met through the country, imitating the New Orleans trumpeters."

The blues, needless to say, are essentially for the vocalist. Jazz, in its pure form, is vocalised instrumental music, and the attempt to transfer the peculiar tonal quality of the Negro voice to musical instruments has given it one of its distinctive features—the "off pitch" sound due to the flattening of the 3rds and 7th ("blue notes"). The roughness and strident quality of the Negro voice has also led to the dissonant and "unmusical" instrumental effects which are so beloved of the academic musical critic. From the Western lumber camps the adaptation of the blues to the piano led to boogie-woogie, now popular in a bastardised form.

An interesting similarity to be observed between blues and *cante hondo* is that both are the products of a *section* of an economically dispossessed class, not the pure proletarians as certain Communist-minded critics would have us believe, but of a declassé element. The gipsies of Spain and the Negro section who created and developed the blues form are outside of normal bourgeois society. The famous blues performers were often people who lived hectic lives, and working in brothels and clubs run by criminal elements, some of them met violent ends (Line-Top Smith was killed in a shooting affray, while another blues pianist, Hersal Thomas, was poisoned by his mistress). Because of the somewhat sordid beginnings of blues and jazz generally, many Negro people are exceedingly hostile to stressing the rôle of their people in its development and origins—similarly, Negro band leaders such as Duke Ellington are keen on "Europeanising" the music.

The study of the verse content of Negro blues must inevitably come from the gramophone record in the main. In this country there are few examples of genuine folk blues available, but in the United States the race" catalogues—primarily designed for the Southern coloured population —have throughout the years contained many examples of records which are of outstanding interest to the folk student.

Earlier in this essay I mentioned that the majority of the blues deal with personal problems. As can be readily imagined, the relationship between the sexes plays an important part in the blues singer's refrain—and eroticism can be found in such pleasantly matter-of-fact verses os :

Take me baby, take me in you big brass bed,
Eagle rock me till my face turns cherry red.

Verses with an obvious double meaning, similar to the following are frequent

If he didn't like my potatoes why did he dig so deep? (repeat)
In his Mama's potato patch five and ten times a week.

The deserted or mistreated lover forms the theme of many excellent blues. For example:

Now, my woman's got a heart like a rock cast down in the sea;
My woman's got a heart like a rock cast in the sea,
She imagines she can love everybody and mistreat poor me . . .

Or,

Don't the moon look lonesome skimin' through the trees? (repeat)
Don't your house look lonesome when your baby packs up and leaves?

On the other hand, the opinions of the dismisser are ably portrayed in such verses as:

Your youth done fail, all your pep's done gone,
Yes, your youth done fail, all your pep's done gone,
Pick up that suitcase, man, and travel on.

It is a contrast to the sugary sentiment of the average popular song to hear a lyric wherein the singer proudly acclaims her ability to "steal your man"

I'll bet my money I can take any woman's man in town; (repeat)
I can take your man and I won't have to run him down.

The lesson can be learnt, as exemplified by:

I'm gonna buy me a bulldog to watch you while you sleep (repeat)
To stop those other men from making their midnight creep.

Lying in between the personal and social blues there are a good number, which while essentially portraying some personal aspect of existence, enable one to glimpse economic and sociological factors shaping the narrative. Into this category comes the famous *Mean Old Bedbug Blues*:

Somethin' was moanin' in the corner, I tried my best to see; (repeat)
It was the mother bedbug prayin' to the good Lord for some more to eat.

This lyric has been termed surrealist, but rather is it a reflection of the difficulties met by the dweller in the slum tenement.

A further lyric which, while a statement of personal grief, carries implications which reflect a portent of smouldering resentment against a society that denies social and economic equality, is the famous *Last Mile Blues*[2]:

Have you heard what that mean old judge has done to me?
He told the jury not to let my man go free.
There I stood with my heart so full of misery.
He must die on the gallows, that was the court's decree.

Later in this blues a direct hostility to the State is revealed:

He refused, folks, to talk until it was too late;
He gave his life to satisfy the State.
When they pulled the black cap down over my daddy's face,
Lord, I begged the sheriff to let me take his place.

Perhaps the most interesting blues are the documentary type. The singer offers a comment on some national disaster such as the Mississippi floods, or some event such as the infamous Scottsboro' case. A short while ago, after the local union had prevented his appearance with a white group in San Francisco, the Negro blues singer, Huddie Leadbetter, improvised an anti-Jimcrow blues during a broadcast. This singer also wrote the well-

known *Bourgeois Blues*:

Now all you coloured folks listen to me,
Don't try to make a home in Washington, D.C.
'Cause it's a bourgeois town . . .

Josh White, far removed from the folk singer, but an artist of considerable talent, co-operated with the Negro poet Waring Cuney in recording an album of Jimcrow songs. A considerable sophistication marked the records, but the verses are of great sociological interest. The following is from *Hard Times Blues*:

I went to the boss at the commissary store:
Folks all starvin' please don't close your door.
Want more food, a little more time to pay.
Boss man laughed and walked away.

Another lyric tells of the burning resentment that the Negroes feel for the treatment they received during the war. No greater contradiction exists during a "war to destroy Fascism" than a self-styled democracy applying racial segregation against a minority of one-tenth of the population[3]:

Well, airplanes flying 'cross the land and sea,
Everybody flying but a Negro like me,
Uncle Sam says: 'Your place is on the ground;
When I fly my airplane, don't want no Negro 'round.'

I mentioned briefly the Scottsboro' case, and one of the best known blues from the collection of protest songs gathered by the folk authority Lawrence Gellert concerns this. I quote two verses, and the indictment of the judge and jury as being synonymous with a lynching band is a damning reflection of the faith the Negroes have in 'American Justice':

Worse ol' crime
In white folks' lan'
Black skin coverin'
Po' workin' man.

Jerge an' jury
All in de stan'
Lawd biggity name
Fo' same lynching ban'.

The Mississippi flood of 1927 was a catastrophic event; round 700,000 people lost their homes, and the death rate was high. The great blues singer Bessie Smith recorded the memorable *Backwater Blues*, detailing the plight of those who became homeless[4]:

Backwater blues done caused me to pack my things and go; (repeat)
'Cause my house fell down and I can't live there no mo'.

Oh, oh, I can't move no mo',
Oh, oh, I can't move no mo',
'Cause there ain't no place for a poor old girl to go.

Finally, in giving extracts from blues verse it would be overlooking an important aspect of the subject if I failed to mention the prevalence of the death wish. This particular aspect of Negro Folksong deserves an essay to itself, but the following lines will suffice as an indication of the

longing for death that pervades so many blues:

I'm gonna lay mah head on de railroad line,
Let de B. & O. come and pacify mah min'.

This desire to meet death and find a better world "up above" has found expression in Negro song throughout the centuries, and no greater condemnation of the oppression the Negro suffers has been penned. Reverting temporarily to a slave song, the same acceptance and wish for death can be found, and one of the earliest students of Negro songs, Col. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, said of the lines below that "Never it seems to me, since man first lived and suffered, was his infinite longing for peace uttered more plaintively than in these lines":

I lay in de grave an' stretch out my arms;
I lay dis body down.

The lure of the blues has drawn many writers and poets to experiment, ranging from W. H. Auden to Langston Hughes. Three Negro poets have used the form with outstanding success—Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown and Margaret Walker. Hughes used blues in the Folk-opera *The Man Who Went to War*, and it is somewhat unfortunate that his flirtations with the Communist Party have led him to write such banalities as *Go Get 'Em Blues*. However, in many of his verse collections he attains genuine blues atmosphere, as in:

I went down to de station.
Ma heart was in ma mouth.
Went down to de station.
Heart was in ma mouth.
Lookin' for a box car
To roll me to de South.

Sterling Brown captures the folk atmosphere more successfully than any other poet, as evinced by the following extract from his poem on the great blues singer Ma Rainey:

O Ma Rainey,
Sing yo' song;
Now you's back
Whah you belong,
Git way inside us,
Keep us strong . . .
O Ma Rainey,
Lil an' low;
Sing us 'bout de hard luck
Roun' out do';
Sing us 'bout de lonesome road
We mus' go . . .

When one turns from the Negro poets' use of blues to W. H. Auden, to take an outstanding example, the difference is at once apparent. His *Funeral Blues* was pseudo-blues of the worst sort, but *Refugee Blues* was more convincing:

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in;
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, they weren't German Jews . . .

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors,
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

In the recently published collection of poems by Harry Brown, there is one quite pleasant blues verse, but on the whole, serious poets have shown little understanding and less feeling for a folk form alien to them.

In a recent essay[5], Alex Comfort stated that both blues and *cante hondo* arose out of a certain set of circumstances, which are—tradition, adversity, isolation. The first two are still existent for the American Negro, but the spread of the radio and the cinema has already had the result of bastardising the blues. Nevertheless it is one of the anomalies of modern America that there still exists a section of the population to whom the genuine blues retain a functional need—out of the crude core of Southern oppression a people is adding much to the poetic content of a rich and varied folksong.

NOTES:

1 Alan Lomax has recorded many primitive blues for the Library of Congress, Washington.

2 The Last Mile is a term used to denote the walk from the condemned cell to the gallows.

3 Racial segregation even goes so far as to separate blood donated for transfusions for wounded men. White soldiers must not be polluted by Negro blood!

4 Even natural disaster fails to break down Southern Jimcrow. The camps for victims of the Mississippi floods were strictly segregated.

5 "Romanticism and Primitive Art" by Alex Comfort (*Life and Letters To-day*, October, 1944).

Book Reviews

TIME MUST HAVE A STOP. ALDOUS HUXLEY. *Chatto & Windus*, 9/6.

How much Aldous Huxley wanted to say in his latest novel *Time Must Have a Stop*, and how much he failed, we realise after having read the Epilogue. He has arrived at a state of spiritual development where the novel is no longer a suitable medium of expression. When a writer has become conscious of the futility of "progressive" politics and socialism, democracy and all the other so-called "left" ideas, and has developed the realisation that the only saving grace for humanity is each individual's spiritual struggle towards integration and becoming one with the All, then he can no longer compress his knowledge into the kind of writing which will be absorbed by the average reader.

Huxley's time of novel writing has passed, he has outgrown himself in this medium, and that accounts for the utter failure of his latest book. The characters are identical with those of *Crome Yellow, Antic Hay* or *After Many A Summer*, the same rich old women, the literary young men, the Epicurians, and the general portrayal of a bourgeois milieu. But there is one difference here; in Huxley's former novels we become acquainted only with the behaviour, the relationships and the ideas of the characters, at best we follow their development as far as it goes; in this latest novel we are presented with identically the same things except that suddenly at the end, in the Epilogue, we are confronted with an amazingly highly developed hero, a Sebastian who has made tremendous progress—but unfortunately we were not present and it all seems a little incongruous.

At the end one wonders why Huxley bothered to write this three hundred page novel, when he practically said all he wanted to convey in one single page. I refer to page 295. Here we find, among other valuable thoughts, Acton's words, which can be quoted by mystic and anarchist alike, into both of which Huxley seems to have developed, with equal veracity: "Power always corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. All great men are bad." This statement and others of equal importance are scattered on the last few pages in an almost disjointed manner, instead of being incorporated into the framework of the novel.

But as I said before it is impossible for Huxley to portray his thoughts in novel form, and that is why we have to partake of his wisdom in small spoonfuls at the end, and find the rest of his book almost unrelated to those last few pages.

The figure who could have been of most interest, Bruno, is so idolised and wrapped into such sickly pink and blue hues of sentimentality, that one feels rather embarassed about him. Huxley tries to show us how Bruno's spiritual influence over Sebastian has to combat with Eustace's material conceptions and aesthetic appreciation of life. The fight between the agnostic and the believer. The hopelessness of Eustace Barnack's life and death contrasted with the rich selfless giving of Bruno, who more or less sacrifices his life to save others. Bruno no doubt is a valuable person, in fact so valuable a person, that he becomes unlifelike, but our sympathies are with Eustace, because he seems a more real figure, a person who is made of flesh and blood and has the impulses and desires of such a solid being.

Another conflict—in which, unfortunately, Huxley again misses an opportunity—is that between Eustace Barnack and his brother John, Sebastian's father. John, the embittered, hard-living, self-abnegating politician, an austere figure who lives solely for his cause and refuses to acknowledge the comforts of this life, contrasted with and fighting against Eustace, and everything he stands for, the ease and comfort and social outlook of a man who has his money invested in the colonies and lives on slave-labour. The antagonism of the two men towards each other becomes crystallised in Sebastian, who hates his father for his fanatical ideas, and is attracted to Uncle Eustace's easy living and luxuries, but finally has to reject both and accept Bruno's philosophy. Why exactly Sebastian follows in Bruno's footsteps, whether it is because of a feeling of guilt, or a genuine acknowledgement of Bruno's values, or an independent development, we will never discover. Huxley cheated us of the most valuable part of his novel.

Nor is this the only abrupt and inexplicable transition in the novel, for Huxley has a trick of making his characters change character. This happens very perceptibly with Eustace, whom we meet first in his sister's drawing room as a jovial middle-class uncle, without the faintest indication that at our second meeting in Florence he will have changed into a self-indulgent aesthete. Similarly, Mrs. Ockham and Mrs. Thwale change during the progress of the book.

It is difficult to determine whether this metamorphosis of the characters is brought about through some deliberate intention of the author which is not made manifest, or whether it arises from the poverty of technique, which Mr. Huxley shows throughout the book. This poverty is not only shown in the general structure of the novel but also appears in the language. It is possible that the technical unsureness is a reflection of his failure to find an adequate means of expression for his spiritual progress.

INGEBORG ROSKELLY.

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SHELLEY AND THE ROMANTIC REVOLUTION, by F. A. Lea. *Routledge* 10/6.

Shelley has been perhaps the most unfortunate of English poets in the opinions of posterity. Those who have praised him have usually failed to understand the more important messages he wished to convey in his poetry. Those who have understood his messages have in general been antagonistic to his views and have in consequence condemned him out of hand.

This is a fate not unusual among revolutionary poets, particularly in England. Blake, for instance, has suffered almost as much as Shelley from the mistaken enthusiasms of people who wished to distort his meanings so as to save their own

delicate opinions from being too much offended by contact with blunt and vigorous ideas. In general, it is very difficult for any poet with a revolutionary attitude to be taken seriously even by his admirers. Blake is regarded as an amiable and talented madman, and any of his more disconcerting statements can be attributed to his madness. Shelley is portrayed as a somewhat silly youth whose arrested development made him liable to indulge in juvenile pranks and to support disreputable political ideas which had no real relation to the value of his "poetry."

This kind of partisanship leads inevitably to complete misunderstanding, and, on the whole, it seems much better to have a reactionary critic who recognises Shelley and Blake as anarchists and condemns them because he considers their teachings pernicious, than a lukewarm supporter who chooses the insulting attitude of supposing that such poets suffered from lapses of sanity or responsibility when they expressed disreputable ideas.

It cannot be emphasised too much that Shelley was never concerned primarily with his poetry as literary writing. He was concerned first of all with expressing ideas, and, though it may be admitted that his poetry suffered from too great intellectualisation and abstraction, it is a misunderstanding of the nature of Shelley's thought and poetry to deny the subjective validity of the ideas he sought to express. Shelley was in dead earnest when he filled his poems with the teachings of Godwin or when he set off for Dublin to convert the Irish to the doctrines of universal benevolence.

Even the most favourable critics of Shelley in the past have found it difficult to make allowances for his anarchism. They have contrived to depreciate this side of his thought by attacking Godwin, from whom he learnt it. The slanders concerning Godwin which were spread by the Tories after the publication of *Political Justice* have died hard, and by perpetuating the myth of Godwin as an unprincipled and inconsistent hypocrite, it has been possible for Shelley's admirers to discredit the Godwinian ideas which are contained in the poet's writings.

Yet thus to deny the intellectual sources from which Shelley's writings grew, is to destroy any possibility of understanding his work. For, as H. N. Brailsford said some years ago, "To attempt to understand Shelley without the aid of Godwin is a task hardly more promising than it would be to read Milton without the Bible".

F. A. Lea, in his new book, *Shelley and the Romantic Revolution*, has avoided these errors of his predecessors, and has produced a capable and satisfying analysis of the sources of Shelley's thought. He takes all Shelley's statements as seriously as the poet himself took them, and for this reason the picture of Shelley that emerges from reading his book is of a mature and developed thinker bearing no resemblance to the whimsical being of retarded development who, to the surprise of his earlier students, appeared to have written such beautiful verse out of a mental vacuum.

Mr. Lea is fully conscious of the debt which Shelley owed to Godwin, and he devotes considerable space to a fair and understanding analysis of Godwin's beliefs and of their influence on Shelley's thought. Moreover, he is just in his discussion of the relationship between Godwin and Shelley, and careful to show that in the differences that arose between them Godwin was not without considerable justification for the attitudes he adopted.

It is unfortunate that we should have had to wait so long for any adequate study of Shelley's poetry as an expression of revolutionary ideas. H. N. Brailsford's little book, *Shelley, Godwin and their Circle*, was a helpful introduction to such a study, but Mr. Lea's is the first substantial work of this nature that has yet been published. There are some points of emphasis which seem to me misplaced—for example, I consider that the influence of Christianity on Shelley's thought has been somewhat over-stressed—but in general I consider that Mr. Lea's is the most valuable introduction to a study of Shelley's thought that has yet been published.

GEORGE WOODCOCK.